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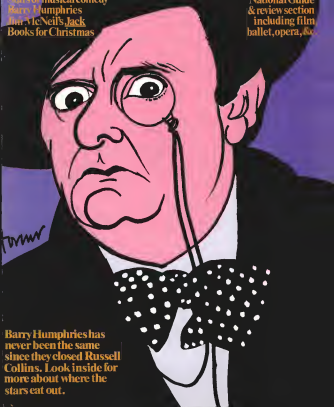
Australia's magazine of the performing arts

December 1977 \$1.95

# Theatre Australia

Stars of musical comedy  
Barry Humphries  
Jim McNeil's Jack  
Books for Christmas

National Guide  
& review section  
including film  
ballet, opera, &c.



Barry Humphries has never been the same since they closed Russell Collins. Look inside for more about where the stars eat out.

# NIMROD

Nimrod Theatre  
500 Elizabeth Street  
Surry Hills Sydney 2010

Saturday 3 December – Sunday 8  
January  
Nimrod Upstairs

Thursday 12 – Saturday 28 January  
Canberra Repertory Theatre

Tuesday 7 February – Saturday 4 March  
Theatre Royal Sydney

and thereafter on tour through New South  
Wales country towns and to Brisbane

## THE CLUB

by David Williamson  
directed by John Bell  
designed by Tom Barnetman  
Jill Ashby, Drew Forsythe, Ron Graham, Ron  
Heddrick, Ivor Kerm, Barry Loyell  
David Williamson lifts the lid off the back room  
politics, the buying and selling, the backstabbing and  
bulldozing that regulate the life of a suburban  
football club

from Saturday 14 January  
Nimrod Upstairs

## Rock-ola

The Last Post/Hiroshima Romance  
by Tim Gooding  
directed by Richard Wharmett  
designed by Brian Thomson  
Tony Llewellyn Jones, Kris McQuade, Robin  
Ramsey, Jacki Weaver  
This world premiere production tours to Adelaide  
Festival of Arts at the Scott Theatre from 6 March

from Tuesday 3 January  
Clark Island on Sydney Harbour  
R. L. Stevenson's

## Treasure Island

adapted and directed by Ken Harker  
designer Larry Eastwood  
Robert Alexander, Alan Becker, Simon Brucke,  
Bill Charlton, Robert Davis, Ron Hackett, Bob  
Hemery, Tony Ingham, Malcolm Kettle, Bob  
Moss, Dennis Scott, Rod Williams  
Sponsored by the Festival of Sydney  
"The best and most original show is true!" – The Sun

from Saturday 28 January  
Nimrod Downstairs

## Everyman

by Rod Kraumann

## Stubble and Marxisms

by Maya Henderson  
directed by John Bell  
a double bill of new experimental Australian work

from Thursday 2 February  
Mayfair Theatre London

Gordon Chater

## The Elocution of Benjamin Franklin

by Steve J. Spear  
directed by Richard Wharmett  
designed by Larry Eastwood  
Over 375 Performances  
Presented in London by Backstage Productions and  
Dorothy Henderson



# Theatre

# Australia

December 1977

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# ★ COMMENT ★

The best theatre is created when a great play is performed by great actors under a great director, and open-mindedly in a great theatre building. A recent production rose to such heights, and in doing so dragged up from the depths the question of whether this country should have a national theatre. The actors were our own, play and director were not, but it was proven that given a great text, in this case Clio's *Laurea Sephora* and a great director, here Lisa Cullen (we have our own, though perhaps not yet in his league), performers here can show themselves to bear a greatness which "false cosmopolitan clouds" have a while obscured.

What Cullen brings to here more than his talent was an aim which commanded reverence. Could a national theatre, demanding by its very nature consistent finances, create such an aim and clear a sky of its own making to allow our glances to stare forth continually? Harry Krippen once roared his "basic provision of just deserts" as being "not that it is often dark rain — it isn't — but that it is very rarely first rain". Could an institution, which to work most successfully going fully formed (from the lips of massive government endorsement) inspire and create the theatre community to attain such a standard? The work of Cullen, and Cullen before him, suggests it could. Successed for instance, Clio fell with a cloak of reverence and gave him the means to present the "largeness" of great plays and who can doubt the result.

The question has a negative kind of relevance in the moment. The Trust, once vested with the responsibility for sponsoring such a theatre, has just had its obligations ripped from its breasts. Now, with a dwindled income supply it must prove its ability to tackle entrepreneurial activity or be cut off altogether. It was Hugh Mount, artistic director of the AETT who came down the mountain with the tablets inscribed with a message of the new celebration in confidence. He looked down at Sydney as the promised city, the "most fertile in the Commonwealth", and possessing the largest population, and he dreamed a dream, in 1960, of the temple "to house such an ideal" as being the Opera House, thus still rising from the waters of the harbour.

But he reckoned without the drama stage being relegated to a dark oppressive vault under this shining edifice to the per-

forming arts, to a crypt which Krippen, again, described as not even fitting as a "home for a permanent company" but alone a museum de la culture australienne. Here failed to recognise too that the tribes of our theatrical blood would diverge even more, each chasing its own golden calf and that this alone would break the great tablets asunder.

And here, left the land of Lot and could not look back for fear of turning into a pillar of salt.

Can the different tongues ever speak with one voice? Perhaps. Hereafter, the new director of the AET, with his aim for making the Opera company truly national, will show the way. After all it took the Sea King to give France its Comedie Francaise, England finally achieved a national theatre as a company in 1961, and as a building in 1976, and Australia (troubled with untold geographical diversity) has never really had one. No, we are more like Germany with its many city states, evermore entrenched in seeking solace for the suburbs with the incredible young that exists. True federal centres which could bring forth a national institution is still only a far-off dream and a logistic nightmare.

From the suburbs to the universities, the head of Co in serving once again that the Americans haven't got a world point on the map required for critical theatre and rock agents John Allen (editor of *T4* producer Margaret) back in 1968 wrote "a good enough reason Noel Kelly might eventually ride a long way if we can begin to think of an indigenous theatre in wider terms than just the intellectual elite". The Adelaide Festival Trust seems to think so too in backing this grand wizard of the drug supertown, Rag Livermore, to the tune of a quarter of a million dollars for his musical as Australia's most famous bushranger. And there is to be a simultaneous take-off from both Sydney and Melbourne (Nigeria and Memphis of Tim Godding's muse of the Koraham flight that was the sunset, Rock 'n' roll).

With those for starters things bode well for an exciting year in 1978, which *T4* looks forward to covering. Best wishes and thanks to all those who have kept us flying despite the odd patches of turbulence—our financial readers, our devoted contributors and the mass ordinary crew.

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## “QUOTES & QUERIES”



Cover illustration of Barry Humphries drawn for Theatre Australia by Arthur Hopper

### EXCITEMENT FOR EVERYONE

**RED LIFEBLOOMER** on the Ned Kelly musical (Music: Patrick Flynn, Musical Director: Michael Carlos) which he is to direct and design, and which he has also written

"It's going to be the biggest thing that has happened in Australian theatre and is certainly the biggest stage production ever launched in Australia with a budget of a quarter of a million dollars.



"I wrote it while on tour with *Mac* in Perth and Adelaide four years ago but have been sitting on it ever since, apart from a few changes, though the story still sticks to the historical events. To me it is a great adventure story, a grown-up game of cowboys and Indians, good as hell indeed.

"It runs about two hours of pretty hectic material leading like an express train to a tremendous climax. Excitement for everyone with every possible musical ingredient — rock opera, opera, burlesque, vaudeville comedy — everything. Each song and scene will be a trip in itself.

"The round staging will have much to do with Patrick Flynn's music and my response to it. The stage has a particular authority, as rich in stylistic variety and imagery, often bursting in melody and has a good rock house.

"I have designed an environment in which it all happens and I intend to launch the time cast of *Ned Kelly* as I have given to my own shows, *Barry Blackbeard* and *Wonder Woman*."

### NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED OF

**JOHN GADSDEN** "I spent two months in New York working at NY University with Rowan Ballou and going to other classes, it was a wonderful broadening of experience. It is a place where there is intense pressure on everyone, including students, to succeed and produce the goods. It's a good thing in many ways. New York theatre is certainly very exciting, but by the same token that pressure can lead to some shallowness. There's no subsidy so everything is very commercial, mostly very good, but it would be nice to see some more risky things going on.

"I went to the theatre every night in New York and the six weeks I was in London — probably too much — and I was very impressed by what I saw. Australia certainly has nothing to be ashamed of. In Britain there is a tremendous concentration on style and polish, and some productions get polished out of existence. The approach in America is very different, there's less of polish in musicals, but the classics and straight theatre often looks form and structure. We fall somewhere between the two, a terrific energy that breaks through the polish.

"I was very homesick for all sorts of reasons, and it really is good to know that I am deeply Australian and this is where I want to work. We are a very different people, especially to the British, England was the most foreign place I went to. It's

wonderful to see the way other people work, but also to have one work validated. Our playwrights are just as exciting as the American and English ones. I'm very much looking forward to working in the Tate/Beynon Centre sessions with Crampton and Shattam, Dorothy Hewett is writing me a part in her new play *Shakespeare's Cross* and I will be playing the Tim Courtenay (where I met in NY) part in Ron's *The Fool*."

### TASMANIA'S LUCKY DAY!

**TIM GARDING**, "The Ascending Optimism tour opens at Hobart's Theatre Royal on November 10th. The one and only Elvo Optimismura, unemployed postal worker, disc jockey says. Forget the New Depression and let us entertain you in the Ascending Optimismura makes an attempt on the world record for optimism."

"See! Mr Hercules, strong man per excellence battle a deadly Queensland tiger."



to the death. Hear? Miss Tammy Gaddy, here and there impressionist and country and westerns musician's assistant to the talk her life story and especially how she found God.

"See! Handsome Duke Loringham, most handsome man playing piano today, performs his renowned dance of the swallows. Hear? The Grand Duke of Agony Calamitous his Cinema What release how the cast Mr Hercules behind the dressing rooms.

## “”QUOTES & QUERIES””

"A dancer and singer will be in outstanding every performance."

Thus says Sam it and your life will never be the same. My chance meeting with the Tasmanian Theatre Company director was Tasmania's lucky day.

### DIRECTOR, S DIRECTOR

**JOHN CULIN:** "Basically working with Lesco Cullen is one of the most stimulating and really enjoyable things I've done in the theatre. I believe he's a great director who understands a great deal about acting techniques and knows how to approach and solve individual problems. There aren't many directors who know about acting; their instincts may tell them when

directors, and I include myself, ask enough of actors all the time. In Australia we are too anxious to demand more of actors. Actors say they like to be stretched, but few really like it when it happens to them. This shouldn't be considered by a director. I admire his inflexible cool. Culin is most potent, nothing has yet ruffled him in spite of trying situations and his substitution after staying up for the last two nights and there is the morning with the lighting. This is exemplary, not often directors can't be patient or tolerant. It is very demanding to a cast to see a director flapping, he gets no sympathy and it worries the actors.

"As a man I like him very much, he is kind, generous and strong-minded. He is not unnecessarily modest about his achievements, but very modest about his talents."

### CONTINUING QUEST FOR MUSICALS

**PETER O'CONNELL:** "We too are on the lookout for original scripts for next year. We would be most interested to receive any previously unperformed scripts, especially musicals with small casts, that anyone would like to send us. We are currently planning the first half of our season next year and would like most of the programme to consist of new works. I can't guarantee that all scripts sent to us will be read immediately, but we'll do our best to read them as promptly as we can." (Reveries Trusting Company, PO Box 344, Wiggan 3600.)



something's wrong with a performance, but they can't deliver what it is, or tell the actor how to correct it. Culin is a very good and experienced actor himself, he acts in his theatre at Deodarum in major roles.

"He knows *The Lesser Devils* very well, this is his fifth production so he knows very well what he wants. His first production was in 1968 with the atmosphere of a concentration camp, his most recent one was in 1973 in Deodarum and was a much more philosophical approach to the play and a much more personal statement by the director. His understanding and appreciation of the play has developed, he knows so well what he wants that he can give us a great deal of his understanding in rehearsal. But he is not trying to tie us down to his interpretation. At first we were doing a very rigid blocking and re-staging of the old production, but now it has developed into a far more personal contribution by the actors.

"Lesco Cullen drives actors hard, he is a very demanding director. Not enough

## Letters

In your August issue "Quotes and Queries" headed "Equity for Speechless", Dave Summers, Queensland Divisional Secretary of the Association reportedly made some casual remarks without us to urge Equity membership of Theatres, Lilies, Marsh et al. What nonsense! That Dave should repudiate Thomson's membership or non-membership as a "life or death" matter for Equity I find mind-boggling.

The aim of "personalist" or television commercial is a fact of life. Equity policy currently is that we do not want as members those having no claim to performing talents. I am disturbed that *Theatre Australia* should publish such items and suggest that you check with the office or our Melbourne office whereby our policies will be accurately conveyed.

For the record, Equity is not struggling to find funds to stay open, as Dave is quoted. Finally, I loved Dave's reference (headed one of John Gingles to "Southern Equity"). The fact is that NSW and Victorian members have heavily subsidised the operations of our Queensland Division for the past 24 years.

Bob Alexander,  
General Secretary.

Would you be kind enough to tell me where aspiring playwrights can get details of the National Playwrights' Conference? Hopefully, if there is one to be held this year, I would like to be part of it, but do not know what type of plays would be acceptable or where to send them.

I look forward to your magazine. Long may it flourish. But what has happened to the latest page — doesn't anyone write to you? The life of a magazine shows in no correspondence. Not beautifully worded glacial exchanges from lofty heights, but a lively forum of ideas and opinions from all and sundry, amateur as well as professional, from people who go to the theatre as well as people who make their living from it.

Thank you for an excellent magazine — and for the above information if you can supply it.

Mary Smith  
Austral, Vic.

Scripts for the 1978 Playwrights' Conference should be submitted to the Chairman of the Playwriting Committee, ANPC, 151 Bowling Green, Footscray, NSW 2011 as soon as possible. Any script will be considered.



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Merry Christmas.

## Books for Christmas

B

The trouble with coffee table books is that you never know where to put them. Not having the sort of house that has entrance halls in which people sit and wait, I usually put mine in the bathroom, on the principle that around the coffee table people will want to talk rather than read. Here then are a number of books you will have to decide where to put, or you can use them as Christmas presents for people with very specific tastes, or alternatively with obviously catholic taste.

*The Films of James Mason* (by Clive Hinchborn, LSP Books, 1974), I was going to say, is for a specific taste indeed, and certainly a passionate devotion to James Mason would help it down here. Other points of interest, though Mason has played an astonishing variety of delightful roles, and made over 70 films, some of them very good ones. To set them down chronologically, as in this book, with titles, synopsis and quotes from the reviewers, makes one's job as difficult as it is, even for a great artist, to put together a continuous body of developing artistic work. Those familiar with Peter's Old Times will be pleased to see a synopsis of *Gold Men* that, along with a picture of P. J. McCordick.

*The National History of the Chorus Girl* (by Derek and Julia Parker, Lansdowne Press, 1975) lives up to its reasonable title, in treating the girls as a species of human inhabiting theatres and the docks of some ports. Thomas Langford himself had certain firm rules for selection of girls which smack of the stockyard: "the shoulderblades, the glutes, muscles of the back, and the muscles of the lower leg must have been drawn into each other." No doubt there is a magic and a mystery about a well-drilled chorus line, but this book fails to capture it. The pictures, particularly, demonstrate that the "romance and excitement" (Langford's words) must come from the stage, not the pages of a book.

The same probably applies to cinema, in spite of the extensive and fascinating coverage given there in *Cinema: A World History* (by Robert Croft-Cooke and Peter Coats, Ure Smith, 1976). The book is nevertheless painstakingly researched, intelligently and entertainingly written and attractively produced. People with even a passing interest in cinema should get a lot of fun out of it.

*Hollywood and the Great Stars* (Hartley, 1978) is a sort of extended colour supplement to boards I used to judge this kind of thing by what they say about Bogart, and although I'm sure it's true, I don't particularly want to be told

that "he is a real hero, a man who walks a straight and undeviating line, a man who lived entirely by his own high standards." This book does capture something of the glamour, however, vulgar though the handsets will find it if you just want a few great shots of your favourite stars it might be worth it.

*The Nureyev Image* (by Alexander Mand, Cassell, 1976) is a very fine book, consisting chiefly of photographs of him, usually either taking scintillatingly into the distance or leaping readily into the air. Leaping into the air, I suppose, is a thing dancers do a lot of, and it looks particularly impressive captured in a photograph. Many famous photographers, including Cecil Beaton, Hans Cartier-Bresson and Lord Snowdon (or whatever his other name is) are appreciated, and it is a book which ballet lovers or those interested in photography might love to own. It is all Nureyev, which I found rather boring after a while, but I am told that there are many people ready to love what he is. For them this will be a very appealing book.

The next is truly a coffee table book — if it had legs it would function quite well. And how suitable that it is all about Australian film. *The Australian Screen* (by Eric Radcliffe, Lansdowne, 1975) is a large, heavy book charting the development of Australian film-making from the beginning until 1974. It must be hard for a publisher to set such a lavish book date so quickly, and the perspective of the recent

years changes so radically. Some of the films given prominence towards the end of this book will no doubt be ignored in similar volumes published in five or ten years. But overall this is a useful volume. It has hundreds of titles and photographs and a vast amount of information on who was making what with whom.

The rest of the books in this Christmas selection are not just coffee table books. Two of them at least deserve a place in the library of anyone interested in the performing arts. *The Common Oxford Dictionary of Aesthetics* (by Hans Kauffmann, O.U.P., 1977) is what the publisher calls an "indispensable work of reference", with over 5,000 entries on ballets, people, theories and technical terms. *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of World* (compiled by Nick Logan and Bob Wolfenden, Ure Smith, 1977) is useful and up-to-date, unlike *Encyclopedia of Pop, Rock and Soul* (by Lewis Mumford, Lansdowne Press, 1974, 1977) which although apparently revised this year has not been revised. It is hard to take seriously a book that quotes Bob Dylan a week after *Planet Waves*.

The *Yamouda Theatre* (Architectural Press, 1977, supplied by A. N. E. Book Co.) is the *Architectural Review* Guide to London's new landmark. It covers the history, architecture, fixtures and artistic implications of this controversial building which sends inquiries about the Sydney Opera House will have to describe as cheap but effective. This is a well-produced and comprehensive guide, with some impressive, and sometimes flattering photographs. Commenting on the controversy Mark Gersonald points out that St Paul's and the Houses of Parliament were both considered hopelessly out of date and conservative when they were finished. "Like them," he says, "the National Theatre can afford to wait."

I have read all last *Director's by Ken G. Hall* (Lansdowne, 1977) because this is my choice, from this particular selection, for an all-purpose Christmas book. In the current boom caused or caused by Hall for ignoring sound commercial principles of film-making and with the increasing interest in movies of our artistic past, this book fits in very well. It is written in the clarity, anecdotal style common to this sort of thing, with awkward passages coming across as charming revelations of the process. As an exception of a list on of film-making and an improving tale of a man who made successful films with very limited resources it should be popular. Above all, for Christmas, it is a very handsome book and the designer, David Dodson, is to be congratulated.





# Ray Stanley's WHISPERS RUMOURS & FACTS

After all the rumour with the Australian Ballet, don't be surprised if Sir Robert Hiplowson announces his own company to tour Australia next year, with some dozen or so international ballet stars drawn from France, Italy, England and America — but not Russia.

Believe that bookings have already been made for Mr Hiplowson's in Sydney and the Palace in Melbourne to accommodate seasons of the Reg Livermore written and directed musical *Mad Kelly*, which premieres in Adelaide December 30.

Kenn Bradstock and Michael Hodgley obviously aren't superstitious since they've set *A Chorus Line* to open in Melbourne on Friday January 13th. By the end of its Sydney run it will have taken over \$2 million at the box office and K&H and ME confidently expect to top that figure in the Southern State. And the next big musical from America does look like being *Amos* — to be produced jointly by J.C. Williamson Productions (Kenn Bradstock) and Michael Gidley.

After the huge success of the TV *Doctor in the House* and *Doctor in Love* on the stage here, it seems likely we'll be seeing *Doctor Thy Neighbour* with the original TV stars. And we can expect Paula Wilson (of *Miss About the House*) to tour Australia for Kine Dance in *My Fair Friend* she's already played in it at Adelaide. Undoubtedly Les Leslie Phillips would like to make another Australian tour — this time in his current London comedy hit *Sexist*.

Good to see Terry Donaghy getting a really big break on the stage at last with the title role in the MTC's *Breaker Morant*. Two of the best performances seen in Melbourne in the 60's were at the Entertainment Hall when Terry played Buck in *Enter a New Reef* and Billy Day. Donaghy himself will be taking up appointment as playwright-residence with the Hepple Theatre Foundation. Hepple are almost certain too to stage her *Box Boys* and *Room for Billy*. Ann Todd Vickers Price would like to bring her new one man show on *Oliver Wilde* here. If he does, wonder if his wife, Australian born Carol Powers, will accompany him, and, if she does, if someone will sign her up for a play. His or maybe something on TV. She hasn't played here since going to London in 1934, and has only made a couple of brief trips back. Yet I recall when I stan-

viewed her in London in 1941 how pro-Australian she then was, proud of the fact she still had a Australian passport.

John Dindoch, John O'May and Michael Lynck from *The 20 and 40 Year Just* are starting to create their next musical. Understand it will be built around one of the all-time big Hollywood silent comedies. Kenn Bradstock is awaiting the American premiere of the re-scripted *Darktown musical* *Oh! Ray* before making any decision to set up an Australian production. Back in Australia in 1979 will be that drag duo Hinge and Bracket. Since their last tour here they've never ceased to make it one stadium or another.

First attraction at Melbourne's Comedy arena year likely to be *The Polish Mount Theatre Ballet*.

Next January 'Noured will be world premiering Tim Gooding's *Rocky Road*, sponsored by the Festival of Sydney. It's described as 'the last post-Hiroshima romance'. Directed by Richard Wherrett and designed by Brian Thomas, can will consist of Tony Llewellyn-Jones, Ken McQuade, Robin Ramsey and Jacki Weaver. Understand Hepple will be presenting another production shortly afterwards with John Waters, Joanne Culkin and Graeme Blandell and possibly Nancy Hayes.

Kenn Bradstock has done it again! It was the proud boast of his Actor Services that in their 30 years — 1946-76 — they made a profit every year. And in the first year of its operations J.C. Williamson Productions — despite a lousy start with the ill-fated *More Canterbury Tales* — also can show a profit. How very strong talk that one of Australia's leading playwrights, hitherto known for straight plays, will be coming up with a big musical. Wonder if it will be historical or historical.

Early in the new year the Alexander Theatre at Monash University will be presenting Don Baily and Peter Pines's latest children's musical, *The Emperor's New Clothes*. For their wondering why Parachute Productions planned John, Paul, George, Ringo and *Free* was cancelled, the answer could be in the fact that Parachute's solo-tour of *Same Time, Same Place* has lost over \$42,000.

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# 100 Years On

Eric Irvin reviews the year in Australian Theatre 100 years ago

In 1877 there were actors in Sydney and Melbourne theatres whose "guilt" who were to dominate popular theatre in Australia right up to the first decade of the present century — George Darrell, Alfred Dampier and Edward Hobb.

The plays in which they acted were the first flowering in Australia of the sensation drama produced overseas some twenty years earlier by Dion Boucicault in his *Joan Pride* (1855), *Jennie Brown* (1858), and *The Colleen Bawn* (1860).

The seeds of the Australian sensation drama were sown by the Sydney dramatist, W. H. Cooper, in his *Sun and Shadow*, (1878), *Feared* (1871), and *Murder* (1873). Darrell and Dampier followed on his heels, producing plays with an Australias setting and content whose chief appeal lay in their strong situations and realistic settings, rather than in their plot or characters.

By 1877 Darrell had shown in his *Transported for Life* that the sensibilities of English and Australian people in our population, and the terms "base" and "honest", could be used successfully to produce a play which could hold its own with English melodrama.

George Darrell started his stage career as an entertainer in Dunedin, N.Z., and progressed from there to his first professional roles in Melbourne. By 1877 he was well established in both countries as actor and author, and had also acted in his plays in San Francisco, Philadelphia, Salt Lake City, and New York.

At the beginning of 1877 Darrell and his wife, the actress Fanny Cathcart, were back in New Zealand, playing in pantomime at Dunedin, in a recreation version of General Welch's *Transportation*. Darrell had first produced this in Sydney in 1875.

In Sydney a young American actor, George D. Chaplin, was sharing full houses every night at the Theatre Royal in Canterbury Street, in a programme of plays ranging from *Hamlet* to *Canada* to the American sensation drama, *Storms of Conscience*. Auding and watching him at these was the American actress, Harriet Bode.

At the rival Victoria theatre in Pitt Street, the actor-dramatist Alfred Dampier was making his first Sydney appearance, as *Murder*. His interpretation was not merely a success, it created a furore, and was repeated many times dur-

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**THIS EVENING.**

Reappearance of the Australian Actor Author,  
**MR. GEO. DARRELL**  
In a New and Original Australian Play, written by himself,  
*18 July 1877*  
**The Squatter**  
*12 June 1877*

George Darrell (as Australian Squatter)	Mr. George Darrell
Patrick Litchell (an adventurer)	Mr. G. H. Ireland
"Red" Erringer (an Old Bushman)	Mr. W. G. Carey
Murdoch Macdonald (a Melbourne Advertiser)	Mr. S. J. Whyte
Arthur Macdonald (his Son)	Mr. A. Day
Pat O'Shea (an Irish Old Bushman)	Mr. J. R. Greville
The Hiss. George de Lough (a modern "mobster")	Mr. Geo. Forbes
Frederick Young (George and company)	Mr. G. S. Carey
Defence (one of the Fines)	Mr. J. R. Greville
Rev. Mr. Brown (of the Church)	Mr. Greville
Police (a group)	Miss Selina Brown
Archibald (one of the Old Bushmen)	Miss Fanny
Wm. Macdonald (George's Old Bushman)	Miss Emma George
Miss Macdonald (his daughter)	Miss Emma George
Patience	Miss Emma George
Capit	Miss Emma George
Dyke	Miss Emma George

ACT I.—Macdonald's Mansion, Melbourne. The wedding day.—The six persons present.—First scenes.

ACT II.—Scene I.—Twelve months after.—Macdonald's mansion.—The old Bushman. Scene II.—Second evening.—Landscape looking, Melbourne.—The second scene.

ACT III.—Scene I.—Eighteen months after.—Macdonald's mansion.—The Squatter (as before). Scene II.—Scene evening.—The interior hall, Town Hall, Melbourne.—The discovery.—The conclusion.—The politics of response.

ACT IV.—Three months later.—Macdonald's House.—Amongst the results.

NOTE.—"The Poems being written" introduced in Act III. was written by George Darrell and composed by David Gray.

ing the year. The first Greenough in this production was the young Edward Hobb who had made his first Sydney, if not Australian appearance the year before.

Alfred Dampier arrived in Australia from Melbourne in 1871, under contract to George Coppin at the Melbourne Theatre Royal. He opened in his own dramatic version of Goethe's *Faust*, giving what the critics described as an "intensely unimpassioned" performance of *Meistersingers*. At the end of his three-year contract with Coppin he set out on a New Zealand tour, and there established himself as successfully as Darrell had done.

Meantime, at the Sydney Theatre Royal in 1877 another American couple was "imported." Mr and Mrs F. M. Bates. They appeared in an English version of *Queen Elizabeth*, a play made famous in the English original by Madame Reston, for whom it had been written by Paolo Garconetti. Reston had played it in Melbourne and Sydney in 1875. The correspondence was "indiscreet," and the Bates found their true level in their next production, the melodrama of *The Powers of the Forest*. They continued at the Theatre Royal with *Carry the Lamp*, *Justice*, *Mind and Glaze*, *East Lyna*, and *Hamlet* (which, like the earlier *Queen Elizabeth*, they should not have attempted).

Dampier followed his *Hamlet* with

*Macbeth*, *Much ado about Nothing* (in which Hobb was Dogberry), and then his own dramatization of scenes from Victor Hugo's "Les Misérables," called *Volcan, Satan or Sinner?* Next he played in his version of "David Copperfield" — *Our Boy* — with Hobb as Ursh Hopp. There came 40 for Gold, an adaptation of Eugene Sue's novel, "The Wandering Jew," written for him by the Australian playwright, F. M. C. Hopkins.

At the time Australia's playwrights were to be found among the country's editors and many newspapers, for reasons which do not need to be laboured. One exception was F. M. C. Hopkins, a squatter who had the friendship and patronage of Alfred Dampier in his work. All the journalist-dramatists were, or had been at some time, actor-writers.

In *All for Gold*, the story of the profits made by two young children in a search through France for money which is rightly theirs, Dampier killed his two young daughters, Lily and Rose. He played their friend and protector, Dogberry. The play proved immensely popular, largely because of the excellent, heart-rendering acting of Dampier and his children.

Dampier then gave Sydney its chance to see his *Forest*, but this time he had competition from the Theatre Royal, where

# DANFIER SEASON

Shakespearean Night

## Romeo and Juliet

Cast of Characters—

Veronica (Princess of Verona)	—	Mr. J. THORPE
Paris (young nobleman, suitor to the Princess)	—	Mr. A. LEMAN
Capulet (—)	(Heads of two houses in variance with each other)	Mr. J. GILMAN
Montague (—)		Mr. KIRKES
Nurse (serv to Montague)	—	Mr. ALFRED BOUTHEMAN
Mercutio (Suitor to the Princess, and friend to Romeo)	—	Mr. DANFIER
Benvolio (cousin to Montague and friend to Romeo)	—	Mr. W. S. GILBERT
Tybal (cousin to Lady Capulet)	—	Mr. H. BOWEN
Prince Escalus	—	Mr. EDWARD HOLCOMB
Balthazar (servant to Romeo)	—	Mr. JONES
Samson (—)	(servant to Capulet)	Mr. BUTLER
Chapley (—)		Mr. WILKINSON
Paris (servant to Juliet's nurse)	—	Mr. HARRY LESTER
Juliet	—	Mr. DANFIER
Prologue	—	Mr. J. GILMAN
Page to Paris	—	Mr. WILKINSON
Lady Capulet	—	Miss ANNE WRIGHT
Juliet	—	Miss LILY DANFIER
Nurse to Juliet	—	Miss JULIA BERRIN

TO-MORROW NIGHT.

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## FOR THE TERM OF His Natural Life.

Chaplin put on the Broadway version of the same play. The *Melind* and Danpfer's *Melind* was second in no character but had impersonated Chaplin's was not so good, though the play in a whole was better mounted at the Royal than it was at the Victoria. Neither production took with the public.

Danfier's costume had succeeded and extended Sydney season with productions of *The Merchant of Venice*, *Osella*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Much Ado About Nothing* until May, when he returned to Melbourne Theatre Royal for a 24-nights season "previous to his approaching departure for America." Twenty two of those nights were taken up by *At the Foot of the Hill*, so his season was extended. In this production one of the villages was played by W. J. Hollaway, later to become, in his own way, another "giant" of the Australian theatre. On the last night of this play George Chaplin presented the Danpfer children with a gold locket each, and W. R. C. Hopkins gave them a gold cross.

After this Danpfer produced Garret Walsh's full-length play, *Melind*. This was a failure. The critics threw doubt on its originality, saying it was a copy of portions of several well-known English plays of the period. Walsh replied, with a great deal of truth: "If Mr. Dean Boucicault, Mr. H. J. Byron, Mr. W. S. Gilbert, and even the late

lamented Mr. W. Shakespeare—I place them in the order of their present popularity—if these gentlemen and their plays were constantly subjected to the almost unceasing analysis with which my poor little pen is harassed, how would the word 'original' as it stood seem apply to even such gods as these?"

On 19 July 1877 it was announced that Garret Walsh had written a new, one-act play for Danpfer and his children—in adaptation of American author J. Hubbard's novel, *Henry Adams*. In this the previous Lily and Rose Danpfer acted, sung, danced, and acted. At the conclusion of its run the Danpfers moved on to Adelaide.

Danfier returned to Sydney from New Zealand in June, opening at the Victoria Theatre with his made and new play, *Transported for Life*, which had been given its premiere at the very Queen's Theatre in Dundee the year before. It had a record Sydney run of 24 performances.

The *Melind* and "The country by Mr. A. C. and his assistants include a cottage interior with a fine view of the landscape outside, a capital scene of a digging party, with lots of the music, a scene 'on board ship' with a 'live' man at the wheel, and that of the rescue from drowning by a passing steamer." Blund Holt played in this the part of a emigrant cookery

In the same month the Theatre Royal was given over to opera, the opening production being Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera*, with eight Italian principals. The Queen's Theatre, closed and sub-let, was taken over by the American actor, Charles Wheatleigh, who opened with *Money the World in Eighty Days*, dramatised from John Fane's novel. It was a big success.

Danfier continued his Sydney season with two more of his plays, *The Tramp Card*, and *Man and Wife*, and a series of popular melodramas. In November he went on one of his usual provincial trips, with success at Newcastle and Maitland first.

In Melbourne, Chaplin joined the actress Ada Ward in a long season of melodramas, and there was an opera season in which the first Australian performance of Verdi's *Aida* was given.

The Danpfers returned to Sydney from Adelaide in September, and went through their repertoire again, this time at the Queen's Theatre, as a result of which Master H. Patton, a 13-year-old, wrote and published "The Lily and the Rose Waltzes," dedicated to Lily and Rose Danpfer.

The Danpfers then left for America, and the Queen's was given over to light opera. Chaplin came back to Sydney for another season, and Blund Holt broadened his experience as clown in the Christmas pantomime at Melbourne Theatre Royal.

Because of the success in Australia of *Henry's* *Adams*, Garret Walsh became the first Australian dramatist to have a play performed in London. The Danpfers gave this play at the California Theatre, San Francisco in November 1877, then at the Broadway Theatre, New York early in 1878. In August 1878 they produced it in Birmingham (Eng.), and the following month at London's Gaiety Theatre.

George Danpfer found his true vocation as dramatist in *Transported for Life*, and continued his long run of success with similar plays, culminating in the production of his *The Sunny South* in London in 1884.

Blund Holt, having learned his business with the Danpfer and Danpfer companies, moved into the opera-house business himself with a series of London successes, and then became "Australia." He simply gained popular English plays, gave them an Australian setting, and cashed in on the demand for Australian stories featured in not created by his former employers.

W. J. Hollaway developed into a good Shakespearean actor, and later formed his own company for a tour of South Africa, where he gave long seasons of Shakespeare. In 1883 he was at London's Lyceum Theatre, alongside with Henry Irving in the title role in *King Lear*. Next he acted with Irving in *Shakespeare*. In 1884 he went to Terry's Theatre in London as manager. In the same year Alfred Danpfer was also in London, at the Princess's Theatre, acting in the Walsh-Danfier version of *Henry's* *Adams*. Under the name of

# FROM HARRY TO PATRICK

Barry Eaton's  
namedroppers guide  
to Sydney eating  
places.

If there is one thing most actors and actresses enjoy nearly as much as working it is eating out. I spoke to a random selection of the acting profession in Sydney to find some of their favourite haunts. Some like to eat before a show, but most seem to prefer being able to relax and eat afterwards.

*Rene Fraser* likes the Little Saml. A French Restaurant at Bondi where he says, the food and the service is terrifically good.

*Shirley Meiselman* adores the barbequed spare ribs and also the atmosphere of Mien Coasian at Woolfala.

For *Pat Bishop*, the Shantung at Kings St. "Excellent Peking style Chinese food at the only prices at which I can afford it."

## WILLIE FENNEL: POTS

Willie Fennell says, "I'm a bit mad on the Pots at North Sydney. Its acceptance bloody good food. They serve a great New Orleans. I just eat a lot and the Pots is really handy to where I live."

*Allen Moore* says simply, "Le Cafe. They are artists." *Jackie Weaver* agrees adding, "Le Cafe is adventurous, excellent and they have movable seats."

*John Meillon* likes to eat at his 'cellar' — the Mossman Rowing Club, where he is a life member. "It's close to the water and I love it!" says John. But he often takes his wife Betty Gibson to various restaurants around Neutral Bay. Particularly Magpie & Ma where they play 1940's type music. They also play "Tap tap on my shoulder" whenever the McIlhennys arrive.

The chef at the Mossman Rowing Club gets another vote from *John & Janet*, who is off to be found darkening the perils there. He also enjoys Fiddlers Three at Cammeray.

*Nancy Hayes* often looks at *Wien*, the little beer garden restaurant at the back of the pub on Queen St. Woolfala. She explains, "It is a very cosy spot as well as the TAB. So if I can't get any work, I can at least try to win some money on the horses!"

## HAYES GORDON: TAI YUEN

A favourite haunt for *Mavis Gordon* is the Tai Yuen at the old markets. "They won't give me their secret recipe for 84¢-Kee chicken — so I have to keep going back!" *Hayes* confesses herself.

*Barbara Fawell* also likes Chinese food and enjoys eating at any restaurant on Devon St after the ladies show.

*Jade Farr* is fond of French and Lebanese food. "Au Chabral at Darlinghurst is absolutely superb. Neil Fitzpatrick introduced my husband and I to it earlier this year. The blackboard menu is really different. Not one of the dishes is in any French cooking books at home!"

*Anthony Forthornal* loves going to the Tam Tam at Elizabeth Heights. He also loves pilled ribs, for when he works!

## KATE FITZPATRICK: LE CAFE

Le Cafe gets a lot of votes from Sydney's actors and writers. *John Bell* and *Anna Fodda* are regulars. *Anna* says, "Patrick really cares about food and creates different interesting tastes." They both adore the beautiful surroundings. Playwright *Dorothy Stewart* says, "I love going there every Friday for lunch to talk to various friends. People like Robin Niven, Jennifer Clure and Arthur Dignam. Even Patrick White and Jim Sherman drop in whenever they can." Then by way of an afterthought, "I also like the food." *Kate Fitzpatrick* also loves about Le Cafe and is often in attendance.

*Henry Steps* on the other hand likes going to Maches at Balmain for breakfast. All because he needs maple syrup on loppers to wake up in the morning. It cannot you wonder just what he does at night!

*Ann Brashell* loves going to the Little Saml after the show, because it is open and the food is good. *Agnes Kest* also favours the Little Saml. "The food is great and they love having theatre people there. What's more it is a long year out."

The problem of eating after a show is a

ing and in Sydney, at most places don't want to leave you after 10 pm.

## TONY LLEWELLYN-JONES: CHINESE CLUB

*Tony Llewellyn-Jones solves the problem by eating regularly at the Chinese Club in Dorcas St which is open until 1 am. According to Tony it is certainly for Chinese members only, but is always full of the white men smoking opium.*

*Peter Williams dabbles out to the Claypot Restaurant at Camperdown Travelodge. "The table, soft lighting and elegant surroundings make me feel less tedious after doing a show."*

*Peter Whyford heads for Nanna's in Bourke St near Taylor Square. Nanna is Greg Bailey and he keeps the place open until the last person leaves. "The clientele is marvellously theatrical," confesses Peter. "There are strange paintings on the walls and a weird decor. It is also B.Y.O. I took Derek Minnema there and he really brought the place down with his stories."*

*Theatre P.R. man Terry de Pold recommends Wallaces in Riley St, Darlinghurst as a seafood place that serves after theatre supper.*

This article is a no-droppers paradise, but John Mowat had to optagne everybody. His choice is Doyle's on the waterfront at Watsons Bay. A memorable lunch there was with Hal Price and his wife Judy, Stephen Southern and Phyllis Newman. The rascals from the Q.S. visitors was — this is paradise! For John it was even better than that because Hal paid the bill.

*Peter Parkinson has two favourite restaurants (greatly little does). The latter because it is a very theatrical experience. There is also a great pub nearby to purchase wine for the meal. His other is the Choyan in Garden. "The best Chinese food in Sydney," according to Peter. "A lot of the Kiffers 600 people eat there."*

## GERALDINE TURNER: UNA'S

*Geraldine Turner sighs. "It's really sad I love lots of places. Una's Japanese Bar in King's Cross is a place I like. It's authentic Italian. Always good food and very cheap. I love that music — They also serve great coffee."*

*John Gaudin likes Harry's Cafe de Wheels because he says to eat there is an experience you can't top.*

*Corinne Pearson likes a spot just up the road from Harry's, L. Luccasote. "It's a tiny bistro and you get the best chicken steaks in town, with the most magnificent sauce. The two Frenchmen who run it are very good. They also do the best French frog in town."*

## KEN HORLER: TONY'S

*Ken Horler and his wife Adrian take a cat lunch and head for Bertram Watson, to Tony's. They like the elegant informality, the responsiveness and singularity of the surroundings and service.*

*Judy Ferris leaves Sails at McMahons Point. "Ross Harrison the manager has every show for customers. It's also a wonderful place to take overseas visitors. Very romantic setting."*

*Dave Reid suggests something different. The Commodore Club in the St. James Building. It is not a club, but a club serve a beautiful emporium. Mostly vegetarian. Try to get a gay wardrobe and watch all Sydney happening.*

*Jon Warham likes the Greek food at Demetri's Golden On in Roddion. It's very pleasant there and there is also dancing. Jon adds, "I know the owner, which makes it even more enjoyable."*

All of these suggestions sound very mouth watering and I'm sure a lot of fun can be had trying them out. If this hasn't been of help so far then perhaps Tony Sheldon's idea will please. Visit a Pubs! That, take home a pizza and watch the late night movie on TV. My favourite recommendation was from Corrie Pearson who really loves the pie and pass offered at Harry's Cafe de Wheels. She really likes to go there however to meet all the makers off the boat.

See you at Harry's



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# Ba-ha-ha-ha-harry Ha-ha-ha-humphries

Cuckoo in the Nest Pamela Ruskin

Australia's greatest comedian, the man who took the mucky out of Melbourne, Barry Humphries, announced on radio before he left Australia to start the pursuit of Broadway, that he had been invited by an American oil millionaire to paint his wife's portrait. Some years previously he had seen a portrait done by Barry of Sir Robert Menzies and was so impressed that he had never forgotten it. Unless, he painted a second portrait of Sir Robert, the portrait that hung so lovingly in the menial nursery in hanging at the end of the banker's long narrow Victorian hall, a source of fascination to all who enter it.

It is a large portrait, a collage not a painting, that was delivered to me one evening — the second last day of 1982 to be precise, by Barry himself, assisted by an antique dealer friend of his, perhaps with the Georg Jensen slogan in mind that it is 'an escape of the future'. The portrait was part of an exhibition of "Ten Little Australians" held at "The Customs Chapel of Australia" — the Myer Music Hall that year, and I had admired it greatly. I will do. There is the lion Bob against a background of jotted paper from his autobiography, "Afternoon Light", his face covered with little rubber stamps of a pig, and the feathers, furrows, eyebrows and all, sharply and brilliantly delineated in charcoal. The likeness is remarkable.

# ha-ha

The wife of the Texas millionaire will need to be done in silk by little golden ant imagines, stepping out of her best dress. That is, if she exists at all. With Barry, one can never be sure. That we have the portrait is a typical example of Barry's unpolished generosity. Dame Edna Everage, who is inclined to disapprove of him, would never communicate such profanity with one of the nation's artists.

At 41, the middle-aged and somewhat tired Mr Humphries who works at a Brisbane post, seems to be a real old character compared with his sister ego, the exuberant, flamboyant and supremely confident Dame Edna. Like all very, very few

of people, Barry is basically a very, very serious man. Whenever he talks on tape into a mic in his hotel, such as the conservation of old buildings, Australian art and so on, the public reaction is one of grave disappointments. Every people are expected to wear the mask of comedy whenever they appear in public.

He suffers from that 'understatement do richness' which means that he is never able to explore all his talents and that leads to a certain amount of frustration. He writes very well indeed, not only in terms of his own material but in other fields too. I remember his poem in the school magazine, savage statements of war among them. He has written a good deal about painting and has while in Australia this year, been trying to finish his book on the work of Charles Caspar. He has painted some really beautiful landscapes. As a straight actor he gave us a glimpse of his potential in the role of the Silliest Principal in the film, *The Gypsy of Windows* to which he brought a formidable and terrifying conviction.

As a performer he is a complete perfectionist. Dame Edna is simply the purest blazon of a bouquet of remarkably real characters. His programmes are the only ones that seem to me to give value for money. They make hilarious reading and contain some of Dame Edna's funniest scenes, discs of nonsense autobiography and, among other writings, a page of laughter-inducing "Notes & Queries". Even his correspondence carries the Humphries touch. I have envelopes that contained a letter from Barry, which has on it one of those dreary stamps of over, then into the letters of a pudge policeman with a mischievous note, signed G.H. Road. The envelope carries a large rubber stamp that says: "NOTE: IMAGINATIVE AUSTRALIAN STAMP" and there is a disembodied hand with one finger directed to it. Another envelope has two rubber stamps on it. One reads, "FIGHT THREP NOT THE VIET CONG They Don't Kill Our Gladiators", while the second says "WARNING Threp Kill Gladiators". Another letter is typed under the letterhead, "The Society for the Preservation of WAR SAVING'S Street Signs". "Fat for Britain Tim" Secretary, B

Humphries. President, Barry Humphries.

Dame Edna made her debut as a Christmas dinner put on by the Union Theatre Company called "Rotum Fire" in 1955, but she really began to make her mark in a sketch at a Theatrical Garden Party, an annual event in those days, the following year. Barry was warning something that has never ceased to appeal him, Australian xenophobia. In the sketch, Mrs Everage had presented herself at the Town Hall, offering to bullet donors to the forthcoming Olympic Games. I remember laughing until I had a strain as one by one, Edna dismissed all those champions of people who would not be available to share the suburban magnificence of Edna and Norman's home. The punch line which has been heard many times since, was "I don't mind New Australians but I can't STAND Foreigners".

# ha-ha

It was from these small beginnings, backed up by some stage experience with MUTE, that Barry launched his increasingly successful one man shows, including *A Nice Night's Entertainment* (1962), at which I saw a rain fall off his chair laughing, *Edna J* (1963), *Just A Show* (1965) and *At Last You Can Say You're Sick* (1978), the last reluctantly presented by Clyde Packer without the assistance of The Australia Council.

In between, he has been fitted as a genius by London's West End in roles and audience discs; and played there in packed houses for several weeks. I turned on the television in my hotel room in London during the Jubilee celebrations and caught part of a Royal Command event performance. To my astonishment, out came the long-haired Dame Edna Everage, concentrating in all her celebratory glory in paying patronising tribute to her MC, the audience and her fellow performers. She was such a nut that I swear I saw the Big Top tremble along the delightful applause. A BBC special was so outrageously funny that the producers was quite unable to proceed as planned, a comment fate for all

those who risk taking on "Australia's own Superman?"

# ha-ha

Berry's gift for coming across good back a long way. At Melbourne Grammar, the round peg in a very square hole, forced to attend football and cricket matches, theoretically to provide moral support, not a role for which he is well suited, would find a rest, turn his back on the game, bring out some very strange-looking knitting and proceed loudly with "Just one. Pearl one, Pearl slipped stitch over" monologues. On another occasion, he used a friend arranged to hypnotise the match master with some very interesting results. He

braved the wrath of the headmaster, Mr Buckle, by refusing absolutely to join the under-11s, explaining that, "I am a consistent team player!" In fact the description is a fairly accurate summing up of Berry's general attitude to authority all his life. No one overrules him and not being ruled, him.

Ordered to get his hair cut on his arrival at army camp during his National Service, he asked, "Could I see the barber's certificate of qualifications?" Naturally the barber couldn't produce one but the army was so impressed by this somewhat absurd regard for regulations, that he was sent by staff car from Pucka to Sepulchre where "a little man produced an ancient and fly-blown certificate for my inspection and my hair was duly cut." Berry remembers this with fondish self-satisfaction.

In 1969, in London, a confrontation took place between the then Premier of Victoria, Sir Henry Bolke, the man who

had so often been sent to his mark, and Barry Humphries. The setting, appropriately enough, was Australia House. Sir Henry advanced on Mr Humphries, navigated him with a notable lack of enthusiasm and said coolly, "You've had a good run." With consummate courtesy, Barry bent his head slightly and replied, "You've had a better one."

When the ubiquitous Harry M. Miller returned from London just after the opening of *Just A Story* there, he attacked Barry and the show in scathing terms.

Humphries is doing more harm to Australia on stage than a whole bunch of dowdy politicians could do in a month. That man Humphries is an idiot!

Mr Humphries does not believe that the mark adorns the earth man, necessarily, does he submit to the doctrine of turning the other cheek. Warming up gently, he cooed, "I have been on long flights myself"





I have been harassed Barry must have been when he made his interesting statement." He added, "Poor old beggar. He must be agonised he's not getting a call out of the show." Then he resumed into the centre of the stage and proceeded to deliver a series of knock-out blows. "I am writing a political thriller based on the successful career of a New Zealand forestry scientist. I do hope my dear friend and artistic adviser Mr Miller will approve. I am also making an extensive study of dogs in the Bush and Flare. Mr Miller's current offerings, in the hope of learning further lessons in political play writing."

From this you can deduce that Barry is clever, repeat, NEVER beaten in a verbal battle. To be fair, it must be admitted that there are many who don't understand, or if they do understand, don't like Barry's smiling and laissez-faire sort-of-up of what he regards as the pressures and uncertainties of Australian life and the gross vulgarity of 'McKinnon'. That they can, he would say but, there are those who find his blustering rambling to be, as terrible as the Australia he pillories is miserable. Perhaps there is something to be said for both points of view.

# ha-ha

Hangovers presents two styles of humor. There is his satire, which I think is his very clever and very funny and there is the scatological humor of the Barry McKinnon type which, upon speaking personally, I find revolting. He has been responsible for some very black jokes in his time. Once years ago, at Luna Park, wearing a broad-brimmed hat and dark glasses and carrying a white stick, he climbed up to the top of the Jack and Jill slide and then hurtled down, screaming, "Where am I? What's happened? I've blind", drawing a laughing crowd to descend him at the bottom.

He boarded a train with a friend one day. The friend had leukaemia, misery, head aches and was on crutches. Barry proceeded to kick and trip and abuse the "impoverished" friend, creating near hysteria among the passengers in the carriage. He was younger than Barry recently, he is said to have planted a bottle of French champagne and a cooked chicken in a city rubbish container and then approached it, dressed in tags attracting sympathetic glances from passers-by as he rummaged there. When he brought out the champagne and chicken, the push to the door was something to see.

Less offensive is the sicker joke of all. When, travelling by plane, he produced the air sick bag from the pocket of the seat and, mutely chomping, by a kind of sleight-of-hand, popped the contents of a tin of Heinz Vegetable salad into it, making the appropriate noises as he did so. As I said before, he's older now! Such performance one hopes, he is in the past.

In spite of the success of Bruce McKinnon and also of his various stage characters, by far the most widely sustained of which is the clowny, putative Sandy Stone, it is Edna Everage, made a Dame in a moment of spontaneous inspiration, by Joseph Whitlam, who has won for Barry international acclaim. Anyone who has watched Barry persuade those front of the house members of the audience who succeed in grabbing one of the gladden the robust dance halls into the auditorium, to wave and to smile their glances in waves, will have witnessed a superb piece of hypnotic-inducing technique. While everyone sings his famous "Wave a gleeful" song, the superior galsies around the stage like a demerol witch. No one can manipulate an audience like the Dame.

The strain on Barry's voice, shaking and wailing at an unusually high pitch, is so great that during the run of a show, he conserves it during the day whenever possible by whispering and keeping all conversation to a minimum. This is probably the reason he first introduced film slides of Edna's mouth into the show to give his voice a brief rest. These silly Barry as they are, are enormously popular with audiences everywhere.

Last year, I went to the launching in Melbourne, of the Dame Edna's Coffee Table Book. It was held at the Qns and Ford Corporation's show rooms and was a riot. A display of some of Dame Edna's famous recipes had been arranged and the Dame gave us all a run down on such culinary horrors as "Snowball and Apple Sandwiches", "Worm's favourite Sausage and Penicillin Potatoes" and, of course, Australia's very own "Lammingtons". Everyone was presented with a delicious green Fanned Web Spider Cakes, sponsored by a large plastic spider and the whole crowned in a plastic see-through box. Dame Edna had written a special "Message to the Women of Australia" in verse, to mark the occasion. Here's one verse on Melbourne the Message Parlor city. "Right now in a St Kilda den Someone's beloved father — Looz married from head to foot — With baby and anal tuber."

# ha-ha

There is no end to the outrageous stories one could tell about Barry Humphries, the tall, now gently greying, knobby-eyed unimpeachable who was certainly a cuckoo in the nest of a very conventional family living in a conventional house in Canterbury. His father was a builder and there seems to have been no theatrical veins in the family. He is too, a cuckoo in the nest of highly debilitated Melbourne, a city that has always looked askance at those who fail to bow down to its idols, let alone try to destroy them. Barry has treated them all as Aunt Sally's, and has not in devastating.

My husband produced the colleague for

the first Dame Edna ever held in this country. It was of course arranged and devised by Barry. That was in 1952 when he was a youth of 18, an undergraduate in need of a distraction from the boredom of his law studies which he gave up very soon after that. In all, he organised three such exhibitions. One of the exhibits, "Wild Pool Tea" showed an Old Melbourne bar located around a tree hollow. It was forcibly removed by an irritated and humorless member of the Alma Mater and Barry was expelled from the Old Melbourne's Association. This distressed him deeply, because, he explained, as he tried to contain his grief, "I wasn't a member anyway."

It says something for his flare those days, that in spite of his attacks on the education to be removed there, his oft-expressed demands for the whole audience, including, muscle-bound conformity of public schools in general and Melbourne Grammar in particular, he has been asked back to speak to the boys on more than one occasion and has done so with all the zeal of a Dame Edna. Indeed the new hall and the wisdom of Geoff Hopton.

# ha-ha

Now Barry Humphries, having entertained Australia and the ABC, London's West End and the BBC, and the frequenters of the Mandarin Hotel in Hong Kong, has begun his discovery and conquest of the New World this off Broadway opening in mid-October, was powered by his New York TV debut a couple of weeks earlier. Or rather, HER debut, because it was Dame Edna who took the hit between her sparkling mouth and plunged about, leaving everyone involved in the show, bewitched and bewildered, and, it is to be hoped, bedazzled.

One wonders whether Dame Edna Everage, and in fact all the other cards in the Barry Humphries pack, is essentially British in appeal or within the comprehension of the great American public. Possibly it will take more than one application of Everage witlines to achieve results. Ultimately, since they've got over the shock of Dame Edna's high-powered lunacy, I would think that her appeal will prove to be universal.

Harold Norm's grouchy friend Yvonne Claxton's brother on the telephone, saw Bruce's amiable marriage daughter, Yvonne a hospital hairdresser, little Barry's father and Edna's blue denim wardrobe will strike an answering note in a few thousand American brains to become a source of amusement and joyful pleasure. Sandy Stone and the repulsive older Morris O'Connor may not go down as well, but Dame Edna will conquer all those who become transfixed by the implausible jollity of the manner from Moscow Ponds.

It is, after all, the Americans who taught us that "There is nothing like a dame!"

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# From COUNTRY GIRL to CHORUS LINE

A musical comedy star is a proven theatrical commodity... an actor who can sing and dance is generally greeted with more enthusiasm by management, audiences and critics alike than an actor who just acts (unless he's an ACTOR like Oliver or Keefe), but a singing dancing actor who possesses charm, energy, presence and an engaging personality can start up more excitement than New Year's Eve.

Australian performers have always prided themselves on their versatility, their ability to shift from drama to comedy, from Shakespeare to Music Hall at the wave of a contract. Although this may seem to be part of an actors job anywhere in the world, in Australia this versatility means more from necessity than choice. The fraternity of really good "all rounders" may be small, but the competition within that circle is tough, and once a performer has star billing as a big musical comedy, it's an uphill battle to continue proving yourself.

Whether Broadway and West End musical stars have chosen frequently built around their particular talents and personalities the Australian musical war is at the mercy of the producers, who, out of necessity must select those shows that promise financial success, and they can be faw and far between these days. Most of our current musical personalities have something to fall back on. Glenn Davis was dismissed a "dramatic actress" some years ago and hasn't looked back. All Paramount is perfectly happy being a wife and mother. Ray Liversmore realised he was a musical comedy in himself.

They are a few of the survivors who know that they are lucky to get a good steady role in a musical once every four or five years, and since you realise that, different avenues are open to you as a *Lessee* the country. A lot of our performers take off once they achieve a basic knowledge of their craft and a few flimsy reviews to help them along. Maggie

Frithgibbon, Darlene Johnson, Elaine Holland, Kevin Colson and the late John Parker enjoyed much success in musicals overseas. Jay Nichols, Keith Mitchell, Neil Kerr and Lewis Flander broke into musicals in London after Australian successes in other genres. Rod McLennan and Vicky Marshall, who attracted huge audiences in their home country, also found their talents in demand in the West End. It swallows your pride and keeps the rust

paid. A case in point: nobody was surprised when Naudyn Hayes, after waiting so hard to reach top billing with her electric performance in *Swing Cherry*, appeared in three fairly big musical "guest" roles in *Promises, Promises*, *Apples and Oranges*. But rather than sit at home with her scriptbook, the lady kept herself in the public eye, albeit in small doses, until her patience was rewarded with the lead in *Some Time Next Year*. Now that the rough edges have gone, Miss Hayes' performances reveal a depth and sensitivity that prove that she has never stopped learning... and the best way to learn is to work.

*Create your own employment.* Open a theatre restaurant, like Tibbs & John Newman at Ruth Purness. Write shows for yourself like Ray Liversmore, or for other people, like Peggy Mortimer, Lennie Deane and Naudyn Hayes. Or hope television makes you look good.

And now a short history. Our first musical comedy stars, usually imported from England, worked for J.C. Williamson's Royal Comic Opera Company. Florence Young was the first in our grand tradition of leading ladies and George Lunn our most popular comedian. With Claude Rainsack, Clara Clifton, John Ralston and dancers Fred Leslie and Ivy Shilling, the company presented such hits as *The Country Girl*, *The Cuckoo*, *The Duchess of Daring* and *The Girl from Rayn*.

In later years, William Cresswell headlined in *The Archers* and *Miss*

*Foot of the Road*, Lennie Moore played *The Merry Widow* and Blanche Brown charmed audiences as *Our Miss Gibbs* for 210 performances. Two great stars then reigned over the period were Maud Fane, who made his office bits of *Going Up*, *Promises, You're to Love*, *Swing Time* and *Tell Me More*, and the beloved Dorothy Brantley who starred in *The Merry Widow*, *You Ought to See Long Lenny* (with Charlotte Greenwood), *Country Cottage* and in a comeback appearance in 1931, the Rodgers and Hart musical *Drawn Easy*. Miss Brantley's career came to an untimely end when she was killed by a heavy fire curtain.

Gladys Moncrieff, born in Sandberg



Coal Railway a Wild Widow



# From COUNTRY GIRL to CHORUS LINE



Bill French, Sheila Bradley and Lorry Crockett in *Good as Gold*

was her popularity at this time, that the Firm was ready to offer Miss Hayes any role she wanted. Plans were afoot to cast her in *Peppermint Frisco* and *South Pacific*, but instead she chose to return home until 1954, when she returned another titled Murray role for Australian audiences, Tully Adams in *Call Me Madam*. After making her mark in radio and television, Miss Hayes returned to the stage to play Mrs. Elmer in *Penny Giel* (1966), but films has prevented any further stage appearances, so she is back in television and has entered the field of personal management.

Murray Gordon is another American who landed a nomination in fact he hasn't stopped leaving them. We first saw him in *Are My Arms* (1952) then came the magnificent *Runover* (with the voluptuous Morgan St. John) in 1955. After setting up the Ensemble Theatre in Sydney, Gordon returned to the musical stage in 1967 with his starring portrayal of Tony in *Hallelujah on the Reef*. He also founded and directed, with Jan Torrey, the exciting new musical arena at Manners Theatre Restaurant.

*Full Portency* was in the chorus of *South Pacific* and *Call Me Madam* progressing to a small role in *Four for Wayne*, then a superb performance as the middle-aged secretary Isabel in *The Peppermint Frisco*. Her first leading role, in *Can Can*, followed quickly, but it was not until her portrayal of Penny Bliss in *Penny Giel* (1966) that she had so close her hat. But Miss Giel, you're still, I'm not going anywhere, and the lady who could have gone to Broadway stayed to be a national treasure instead. She is currently appearing in *Sole* by *Sole* by Youdell.

Gloria Jones played Susan in Brisbane's Civic Theatre, Warfield in *Over the Moon* (1958), Rose in *The Seven Year Itch* (1961), Anne in *Four Can* — twice, Mrs. Pritchard in *The Threepenny Opera* (1961) and Monna Rose in *Gypsy* (1973). The track record

speaks for itself! Now that Gloria has brought her talents to the wide screen, perhaps we will see her in an Australian musical film. Until then, she can be seen at Sydney's Mosaic Loft in her own show, *From London* walked straight into the lead role in *The Peppermint Frisco* (1952), and was promptly sniped up by that budding new medium, television where she remained fairly unnoticed for several years. Her stage appearances, including *Wicked* (1965), *Over the Moon* (1966), *Anything Goes* (1971), *Peppermint Frisco* (1973) and *Anne in Four Can* (1974), have always been warmly welcomed, and before Miss Lonsdale left the country in 1976 to try her luck in the USA, she consolidated her position in the musical theatre with an electrifying performance as Rose in *Gypsy*.

Sheila Bradley, after scoring a triumph in the West End production of *Runover*, came to Australia as the star of the highest musical, *Gold Mine A Goshawk* (1959) and stayed to star in *Oliver!*, *The King of J.*, *From a Ransom* and *Over the Moon*. *A Madhouse*. The *Warrigals* *Mad* *Red* *Spies* looked before we saw her Rose in *Gypsy* (and what a pity she didn't do *Canterbury Tales*), but we were treated to her performance as Vera Charles in the undistinguished JMW production of *Mean Street*. Barry climbed from small roles in *Lady Myster*, *From La Dancer* and *Hello Dolly!* to a very funny performance as Rudolph the Winter DI in the lead in

*From a Ransom* and *Penny Giel*, followed by excellent work in *Peppermint Frisco*, 1976 and *A Little Night Music*. He holds the record for playing Frank Butler opposite four of us at five.

Anna Doolittle, *Johnnie Lockwood*, after many years in variety, played *Fanny in Oliver!* (the role originally intended for Gordon Cliver, and subsequently played overtop by John Mather, Barry Humphries and Robert Kenealy). Several years later, Lockwood appeared as the Mollie in the musical *Let's Embrace*, *Tales*, followed by the not so successful *When We Are Married* and *More Canterbury Tales*. His television success as *Number 99* has earned him a larger following, and he is currently entertaining viewers in *Marionettes*, *Whisper in a Penny*, *They Happened On the Way To The Forum*.

*Nancy Mason* used to hide behind the scenery as a 16 year old chorus girl in *My Fair Lady*, but she was dropped onstage long enough to score her first triumph as *Hedy LaRue* in *How to Succeed* (1963).

After a string of brilliant cinematic roles, Hayes Gordon persuaded Nancy to audition for the lead in *Sweet Charity*. Her outstanding success in that show led to many more exciting performances in such musicals as *Shore of Sea*, *Sally the Singing Cowboy* and *Little Mr. Nancy's* appearance in Richard Wherrett's excellent production of *Alma DeGuzman's* *Swing Home* in the Musical

Johnnie Lockwood



# From COUNTRY GIRL to CHORUS LINE



Kevin Collier in *Time to Dance*

revealed that she may well become one of the country's foremost comic actresses should she ever decide to hang up her dancing shoes.

Benny Gibson burst onto the stage of Sydney's Philip Theatre as the strong-haired Vicki in *Time Out* (the rock musical version of *Twelfth Night*) and was greeted with reviews that proclaimed her "a power-packed pocket-sized rocket" and "a madcap comic bomb". Benny, currently retained the exclusive property of Sydney (nicknamed *Australia*) where she has delighted us in *Saved* (Cobbett), *Anna La George*, *Amor Got Your Gun* and the excellent *Martin St.* revival of *I Got a Dot* with Doug Kingman.

When "leggy" voices are required for musical comedy, the world of Opera contributes many a fine artiste. Jane Broshill's rare musical comedy appearances have been for *Golden Corral*, who presented her in *The Journal of Misses* and her West End success *Robbery & Assassination*. Suzanne Steele made an extraordinary impact in Atlanta as *Miss of La Mancha*, and Rosina Rausch must be our foremost champion of Rodgers and Hammerstein, having urged us to "Clash Every Mountain", extolled the mysticism of "Bali Hai", and assured us "You'll Never Walk Alone". Miss Rausch also played Jane in the Memphis production of Cole Porter's *Out of This World*. Always Looker was Vera Simpson in the *Misses*, Pal Joey, and the regal Lady Thing in the Tent Show *The King & I* (1967), followed by two charming performances for JCM, in *Contemporary Tales* and 1776.

Of the pretty, sweet-voiced sopranos who have graced our musical stages, Carolaine Morrow has dominated the field

since playing the 16-year-old Sam MacAfee in *My Darling Clementine* (1961). With a formidable list of credits behind her, including the title roles in *Lady Mary Sunshine* and *Charlie Girl*, Miss Morrow is back in the spotlight after too long an absence, as one of the three stars of *Sisterly Love* by Sandilands.

Patty Homingway has never been far behind her greatest success being *Mavis* in *First Lady Mary* (replacing American import Wendy Waggon). Lady Luckin in *Once Upon a Mattress* and *Deson* in *The Secretarial Sister*. Judy Banks, Helen Zaraloff, Maureen Howard, Roma Coleman and Rosaline Howard have all made their mark in similar roles.

The individual contributions are a mixture of the pastimes and much more to the country usually with its imported company and stayed to achieve other productions. Carl Randall, Pat Bennett, Kenneth Laird, Al Thomas, Myron Natchez, Corinne Chase, Nina Cost, Bill Yule, Ann Martin, Glenn Quilley, Susan Swarford, Gordon Syd, Keith Lee, Raymond Dupont, Natalie Weiss and Rene Arnold are a few this spring to mind.

The lot of house grown talent is even more daunting, but we can remember with pleasure some excellent work by Keith Peterson, Bill Newman, Doug Kingman, Ray Livernmore, Barbara Wyndes, Peggy Mortimer, Bobo, Healey, Jean Bailey, Will Mulvey, David Harnwood, Bob Harnett, John Peterson, Joy Grinstead (Westmore), David Williams, Robina Beard, Judy Roberts, Lesley Baxter, Tikki Taylor, Rod Dunbar, Ormande Douglas, Ken Wernett, Joy Beale, Allen Harvey, Janet Davidson, Joann Cullen, John Waters, Ben Walker, Buster Scoggin, Shirley May Donald, Peter Noble, John Newman, Graham Best, Bill and Lucy Donaldson, Joan Brookcliffe, Kevin Johnson, Michael Cator, David Spouting, Noel Mitchell, Terry Donovan, Jon Stevens and Liz Harris.



Susan Swarford



Carolaine Morrow



Rosina Rausch



Jane Broshill

# From COUNTRY GIRL to CHORUS LINE

Also not to be forgotten are the star-making actors who have displayed sublime gifts on the musical stage, most notably Jan Facci, Joan Boney, Marlon Brando, Max Baucus, Mathew Garwood, Larry McDermott, Nick Tate, Jan Fawcett, Melissa Jaffer, Mary Hardy, David Haines, Alan Tait, Margo Lee, Gordon Glenwright, Barry Barker, Jane Hardie, Frank Lloyd, Judi Farr, Noel Ferrier, Renee Bourne, John O'Connell and Frank Wilson.

And what of the future? Do we have a new breed of exciting young musical talent? You bet. A Chorus Line boasts at least five potential "stars." Pamela Gibbons is obviously only one step away from her own show, and David Addins, Peter Toppo, Marlene Raps, Jack Webster and Karen Johnson have all established themselves as strong talents in previous shows.

Geraldine Turner, who played Patsy in *4 Little Night Moons*, is the latest of our boy-crazed ladies, already strongly compared to Patsy Cline. Although this may be working against her at the moment, as my mother always says, they just haven't written the show for her yet.

McIntyre has Angie Pridgen, who would seem seem to my mother and Caroline Gibbons, the female star of *The 10 o'Clock 15 After Jax*, is not only a powerful singer but an accomplished actress to boot.



Geraldine Turner

Barbara Lee Sang was one of the early players to be found in the short lived *Waggle Show* (1975) in her first stage appearance (she was to have played Kim in the First Show production of *Eye Eye Eye* alongside Barry Clayton and Greta Munn in 1987 but the whole enterprise folded prematurely). Mrs Sang revealed a strong personality and a fair sense of comedy.

*Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* produced Stephen Thomas and Brenda Kersey who could easily knock the Patsy-Cline-Hewitt team off their rock musical throne. Donna Lee, a young lady married in show business since birth, is a bundle of singing, dancing energy reminiscent of her mother, Gloria Deane.

John McManus, although generally an actor displaying exciting promise in *Unluckyf and Grouse*—an Australian counterpart to *Red Grey*—Kerry Henderson replaced Sam Walker in the title role of *Gypsy* for several weeks to much acclaim, then was an evasive when the agent filled in for the aging Ken McQuade in the last, unannounced rock opera, *Moro* at the Victoria Lounge. And Jack Connolly, in her musical comedy debut in *Eye Harrington* (she was to have played Malena in *Great With The Wind*) was the stand-out attraction of *Apples* with Eric Alden. Mrs Connolly has since appeared on television following an album.

The horizon is bright at the moment, our top talent is on display in several venues around the country, and the atmosphere is competitive and conducive to creativity and achievement. So don't believe them when they say the musical theatre is dying as long as a girl like Julie Anthony can be promoted for her first stage appearance by a handful of experts, was a standing ovation in the title role of a big musical like *Dream*, and two years later, become a star in the West End (and I said the show would die in the time well, you can't win 'em all) as long as our managements can keep stars like that, there is no cause for alarm. Our next Gladys Monaghan might be a bit older right now, and New Year's Eve might come sooner than you think.



Barry Barker

In the last issue of *Theatre Australia* the Theatre Royal's past was investigated. Here we look at its present as Sydney's first

rebuilding, and its revival theatres in contrast with a historical insight into Her Majesty's.

Ross Thorne

# Sydney's Theatres Part 2



View of show-ends, the balcony and stage.

## The Empire alias Her Majesty's

The Empire Theatre opened in Quesant Street on the last day of February 1927 with the first Australian performance of the musical variety, *Happy*. Ernest Kells was in charge of the production but Rufe Naylor was the governing director and moving-lavender-bellenger Eugene Thorne had.

Rubens and Chant was the architect and they achieved a remarkable design for

the site. Probably no other site has had so many people squeezed onto it for theatrical presentations. The site not being quite square, the architect used a diagonal axis for the centre line of the auditorium and stage. Only enough space was left around the auditorium for a first stage to house change plans, dressing rooms on first floor and a musician entrance vestibule.

The stage was meant with the rear corners cut off at 45 degrees by the external walls of the building. When the Australian Ballet performed the rear back drops possessed broken hanging battens which dropped away together with the scenes below, thus gutting the drop-scaffolds for flying. Although these battens created the proscenium was a wide 42 feet which was very suitable for opera and ballet.

In a fan-shaped auditorium which was twice as wide as it was deep, 180 feet wide by 90 feet deep, there were 3,000 people seated on two levels. The angle of the side walls was over 132 degrees to the stage front which made it impossible for nearby patrons to view the action on stage. (But they said these seats for a third the price of the remainder!)

This rather cheap theatre, which was unique except for the proscenium and the open boxes in the scalloped front of the dress circle, failed and became a cinema in 1929. It remained a second-run and "juvenile-film" cinema until 1949 when J.C. Williamson Theatre purchased it. It reopened as a live theatre in February that year with the Koro River Company which



The Empire Theatre, Sydney, 1927. Photo by the author.

run for an amazing 54 weeks.

Between 1950 and 1952 the Empire re-commenced its association with musical theatre. Gilbert and Sullivan, and ballet, including some presented by the Borovinsky Company. During this time, particularly for ballet, the side banks of seats remained empty but at the end of 1952 the theatre was closed for refitting and alterations.

In June 1953 the Empire reopened to South Pacific. Margot Fonteyn performed with the Borovinsky Ballet in 1957 but in 1960 the theatre closed again for five



The Majesty's Sydney, 1927



The Majesty's Sydney, 1927





Reconstruction of Theatre Royal, Melbourne, shows a steel structure, with a temporary roof, providing facilities for patrons while the building is rebuilt.

weeks for more excavations. It is spread under the new name of Her Majesty's. The capacity had been reduced to 1,728 persons, from the former licensed 2,515 in 1958. New side walls narrowed the auditorium and 2 traditional boxes had been constructed each side of the promenade. A sixth circular promenade foyer now occupied space formerly held by the last seven of the back stalls.

The opening production was *My Fair Lady*, which lasted 34 weeks. The Australian Ballet and Opera made the Theatre their home and J.C. Williamson continued with musical productions and occasional special attractions such as the Sutherland-Williamson Opera Co. of 1965. At the height of the Australian Opera Season on 31 July 1970, the theatre was destroyed by fire.

Williamson considered other sites, including the Regent, for rebuilding but decided to reuse the site. John W. Roberts and S.A. Bagg (Pty) Ltd were the architects and they ingeniously designed the theatre with the main square on to the Quay Street frontage. They maintained a rather shallow and comparatively small stalls so that adequate foyer space could be obtained on a usually existing multi-level

system. The larger dress circle extends high over the layers to the street alignment, 90 feet from the stage. The stage is large with excellent vehicle access. Dressing rooms and other facilities are a distinct improvement on the old design. The 1,400 patrons have a small restaurant and bar service on the foyer below ground level.

The new theatre opened with the rather unappreciated musical, *A Little Night Music*, on 10 November 1973.

The history of productions by the original J.C. Williamson Theatres Ltd has closed this year after a century of business. It is hoped that both Her Majesty's and the Theatre Royal receive sufficient professional expertise in production and public support to continue their long tradition.

Robert F. (born Sydney) Plan of the original building, 1877. The rectangular plan is also considerably different in 1967.





JOHN BELL  
JENNIFER CLAIRE  
RALPH COTTERILL  
RONALD FALK  
BEN GABRIEL  
BRIAN SYRON in

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# THE OLD TOTE THEATRE COMPANY



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### THE NORMAN CONQUESTS

BOB ELLIS

*The Norman Conquests: Table Manners, Living Together, Round and Round the Garden* by Alan Ayckhourn. Old Tote Theatre Company. York Theatre, Seymour Centre, Sydney, NSW. Opened 3 August 1977.

Director, Robert Quiney, designer, Larry Eastwood.

Norman, Tony, Doreen, Joan, Anne, Vincent, Lang, Tom, Peter Adams, Sarah, Jack, Pam. Rep, Alan Tolan. Ruth, Jennifer Hagan.

*The Norman Conquests*, Alan Ayckhourn's triple decker set of interlinked domestic comedies (once taking place in the kitchen, once in the living room, and once in the garden of the one big house in Sussex over the two weekends) is among other things a celebration of several kinds of recent and ancient British theatre.

Norman, the upper-class suburban bourgeois, making delicately against the continuance of British life, even much to

the Angry Young Men of the Blues, much to their easy smugged content of the nation, the Butleys, Morgans and Little Malcolms, and even more (especially when played in London by Tom Courtenay, the great man's dead ringer) to the boating, bookish carnality of J.H. Lawrence.

His loved, twinkling-eyed wife opens everyone from Shaw and Russell back to Pinter and Faldut.

Anne, the broad, life-crushed and stark agent of the first monstrosity of her last, is your basic Shaftsbury Avenue Cardie — stuck in being house, landing her in bed over her and pining for high society, and wrongly seeing in Norman, her rumpled, sandy brother-in-law, the tap tap tap of Peter Pan at her window.

Ruth, his farrow, detached and occasionally liberated wife, is your pure Shaw heroine, asking her man for bread and not altogether losing the taste. Tom the absent-minded country vet and Anne's warring postulant sister, a loving essay on amorous dysfunction, even much to Feydeau, when comedy and Whitchell have, as do Sarah and Rep, the disruptive suburban couple, on white enorged bourgeois reactions the drama roles, shell and they're backslapper respectively.

On top of this all the characters have about them the smell of Ben Jonson's *Barren* — one read each line, and misheard and crashing into furniture, one slipping shy one immensely dour, one overly hairy, one subtly shrewish. The power, driving consciousness and black

understandings, on the other hand, owe much to Harold Pinter.

As a plagiarist, one might say, Ayckhourn — as a plagiarist of genre, with audacious rarely happen for longer in live theatre even, the T.S. Eliot of British comedy — what he needs is also an enlarger into something rich and fine.

As much as anything else his dramatic success is due to the accuracy with which he discovers the self delusions of the suburban classes. All feel (rightly) left out and sold short by life, each pining for one bright shaft of corruption to transfigure the cage in which they dutily live.

Anne has led for example on the dream of her duty weekend in Hastings with Norman. The vision suddenly shifts to East Greenwich, then Southampton, and the indignation withers away while Norman, the late Force let loose in the home-mover bed, puts on a vegetable-meat soup, starts delousing the furniture, vegetation and animal life and leaving the women untroubled, amiable and pliant.

Rep, the chunky real estate agent, being sootily through Norman, urges him on to wickedly and wickedly cadences, laughing like a clown. Tom, usually belaguered, marvels at his sexual technique. Ruth his myopic, thunderously cutting wife, looks on him as a great unbroken-trained dog, who pings just anything she smokes at him. Sarah, his manipulative sister-in-law, sees him as an almost Maphrologian threat to the intimacy of house and home.



Tony Doreen Jones (Norman), Jack Fair (Sarah), Vincent Lang (Anne), Jennifer Hagan (Ruth) and Alan Tolan (Rep) in *Table Manners*. Photo: Robert MacFarlane.

But all of them carry the blundering, club-footed, moon-bowling gusto. He, at least, will have a go (albeit in circumstances carefully prearranged by himself to ensure his total failure), and all in turn are almost excited in by his unskilled but sincere attempts for anything that's on.

A danger exists that myself might see Norman as the id, and the others as variations on the other members of St Ignace's Delphic group, or Norman as the Aristotle figurehead adrift among the more human rats, and he would, I think, be right.

But he would miss I think, the point, which is that the play's triumph is due to its length. In six hours rather than the two which some fools still think it should be, the author has time to try exhaustively

with many ideas, to vary, echo and track again and again in a single idea, to make some recurring thoughts when applied over three plays appear like old friends. One play called *The Norman Conquest*, would have been of small account. The three plays we now have are, in total, desperately rich as a drama of our time.

With such an amazing chase to cover, with his talk, would do less than his clattering feet, and all in this cast do remarkably well, once when compared to the London versions which I saw, in which Michael Gambon's set, when I thought was impossible on that night, was no better than Peter Adams, whose astute bewilderment was like the men visiting us.

Jennifer Hagan as Ruth, kind, beautiful and malicious, by far surpasses her Lon-

don counterpart, a more straggly method, as did Alan Tobin, magnificent-bright and slowly growing as Ray, an inspired piece of casting. As Anne, Verónica Lang was more valiant, I think, than good, smiling too much and forgivingly through too many years. As Norman Tony Lee-wholly-Jones, bound in due course (but not before) to be Australia's Oliver in my view, and I will be good money on this economic forecasting, showed much but not all of the great stage actor he is yet to be, scared, childish and raging like Lear at the maddest moon, he missed but did not surpass Tim Cootney's definitive, pitiful, heartbreak scholar. Robert Quinnen's production was very very good and Larry Eastwood's settings lovely. In all a great price, done proud and with infinite love.



John Gaden (Norman) and Geraldine Turner (Anne) in Nimrod's production of *Ashes*.

## Fine, frank and poignant performances by Gaden and Turner

### ASHES

KATHERINE BRISBANE

*Ashes* by David Ruffin. Nimrod Downstairs, Sydney, NSW. Opened 12 October 1977.

Director, Ken Hodder.

Costs, John Gaden, Anne, Geraldine Turner, Douce etc.; Alan Butler, Nurse etc.; Suzanne Replante.

*Nimrod Downstairs* is beginning to arrange a character which audiences can count on as a real asset to the Nimrod Theatre — no longer a sense of secondary importance but offering a different and from time to time even a more valuable experience.

It has grown naturally out of the trial and error efforts which with the help of Shakespeare have evolved into a new style of actors' theatre boasting significant performances like Peter Carroll in *Black Add* about *Working* and *The Christian Brothers*, John Gaden as *Provençal* and *Garden Chatter* in *The Absorption of Benjamin Franklin*.

*Downstairs* special quality is that it is a very private place. It responds to a sharing of personal fantasy, desire, resistance and

so on — in fact to the experience of vulnerability in human nature such as we saw in *Chatter*'s performance, in Tony Sheldon as the speechless boy in *Inner Focus*, and Alan Gaden in *A Search of the Imagination*.

So David Ruffin's highly controversial play, *Ashes* — in part the story of a childless couple's attempts to conceive, in part an epilogue for Ireland, divided by violence from her heritage — is well placed in that sympathetic environment. And it is a pleasure to welcome back John Gaden to Nimrod in the role of the ungrateful husband.

In the *The Australian* audience has become accustomed to a style of personal confession in the largely domestic context of our play writing. *Ashes* is a document in

the same genre and is more intimate in its imaginative focus than any of our authors have dared — or wanted — their writing to be.

At the same time, it gathers the personal experience into the social experience of a generation which has no alternative but to look forward desperately from the ruins of one social system to the conception of another.

Celia Harding, a teacher from County Antrim, is living at an English country town with her wife Anna. They have moved from the city resolved to start a new life of a more natural and contemplative kind and to start a family. Surrounded by burgeoning parenthood, so often vacantly started — Celia and Anna are unable to "click" as they call it. There follows a humiliating reveal of sperm counts, urine tests and gynaecologist's advice on rhythm and douches and sexual positions.

Historically supported by a sense of humour, an education and a genuine belief in the family as a natural order, Anna and Celia in their own way, achieve a pregnancy. It requires nine months of bed rest and ends in failure.

The death of the child coincides with the death of a relative in a Belfast bomb blast, and in a long and moving monologue Celia describes the pointless carnage of the explosion.

In the subsequent funeral ceremony, confronted by what to some is stubborn men and women desistingly, Celia hopes at message for just anyone, for across the heads with her own language. The image of blood is strong in the play — but not as a source of strength and unity but as a poison destroying the child and destroying Ireland.

In its place the power lies in the hands of the bloodless bureaucracy — the National Health, the politicians and in the last scene the council adoption office.

In its way *Atmos* is another example of a kind of play common among British writers in the late 60s and early 70s, which make a plea for personal passion amid what they see as a sterile and cold kind of life.

*Atmos* has two very fine, frank and poignant performances by Geraldine Turner and John Guden and the play is worth seeing for their alone. Under Ben Harter's direction they share the acutely felt problems of the play honestly with the audience and the audience responds in like fashion.

In this play not supported with elegance and refinement by Suzanne Roylance and Alan Beckett as the rest of the characters — nurses, doctors, receptionists, ambulance men and the like.

They capture our attention, and our feelings and leave us a little more aware of our fellow human animals — playwright can ask no more than that. *Atmos* might have done better to choose the intimacy and sympathetic ambivalence of the *Downstairs* for its lack, currently aptness and equally a cry for help for another kind of destructive predicament.

## Marriage! message! medium?

### A MARRIAGE

REX CRAMPHORN

*A Marriage* by Philip Mackie. Ensemble Theatre, Sydney, NSW. Opened September 1977.

Daphne, Hayes Gordian, daughter, Brian Nickless.

Richard, Joe James, Amanda, Christine Woodland, Angie, Carol Passmore, Claire, Louise Clarke, Oliver, Peter Williams, Phil, Mark Field.

Reduced to its bare bones, *A Marriage* is about a writer who loses his wife for his young research assistant and then leaves the research assistant for the wife's close "best friend". The play's novelty is its casual point of view: the writer's progress is a discovery that his work, intertwined with a little pleasure that is unaccompanied with emotional responsibilities, is more important to him than either marriage or love.

Work and pleasure are given increasing deliveries, an makeshift monologue, by the writer and the close friend, love is not only undeveloped, but also represented in a generally negative light in the fairly roomy, sexual attempts, lies and rows staged by the women who have been "abandoned".

The negative aspect is really only softened by the note of hapless devotion and patience sounded by the wife — her twenty-year "investment" in marriage leaves her unable to do anything but wait for her husband's return. This rather refreshing point of view doesn't begin to declare itself until half-way through the second half and until it did I was looking impatient with what seemed to be a very run-of-the-mill living-room piece.

And that brings me to my main problem — the genre. The play seems to have a core of sadness, personal feeling, almost, one might think, an apology to *pro vita* but on the part of the author, Philip Mackie. But it is ruthlessly squashed into the mould of well-crafted comedy.

Only a few weeks ago I saw a play at Kilburn which gave me just the same impression (*Away March*). It is perhaps explained by the fact that the writers concerned have done most of their work for television.

*A Marriage* is in much more interesting and, in its point of view, original play than *Away March* but the genre is substantially the same — middle-class moral conflict with special emphasis on the area of sexual fidelity presented in an uneasy manner of living-room realism and one-line gags.

I find the emphasis, as the audience laughed with cheerful pretence, that the hope of this kind has become a convention of communication — that the shape of the lines, their intonation, length and so on, irrespective of their verbal content, is

as recognizable a cue for audience response as a card with "laugh" written on it and that for all concerned, audience, actors, writer, a steady pattern of gas faces and laugh responses is all that holds the occasion together and stops it degenerating into various kinds of chaos and darkness — boredom, incomprehensibility, silence.

The play isn't the only heavily formal convention in an evening. Action is rigidly confined to drinking and solo-pivoting. But again this doesn't seem to alienate the audience. Can it be that they go home and pour drinks and sit on sofas and put on their faces and slog it out gag for gag to hide the boredom like these absurd manoeuvres on the stage?

Of course they don't. This is just a play and these conventions are just a transparent, sugar-bazed medium in which small doses of thought and feeling can be peacefully administered by skilled writers. I think my problem is that I have an allergy to the medium which interferes with my assimilation of the message.

Contrast *A Marriage* with the Neil Simon plays produced by the Ensemble earlier this year. The balance is entirely different — Neil Simon writes dialogue comedies which have a firm base in psychological truth and mature observation but they never leave one in any doubt that the situation is comic. *A Marriage* makes me feel that it would like to be a serious play but doesn't think anyone would believe. And it's not even as if gags and serious situations are mixed — look at Woody Allen's *Annie Hall*, where they spring naturally from character and situation and never give the impression of being imposed to make the material palatable.

Within the limitations of the genre, the production was efficient and I liked Carol Passmore in the wife.

## Engaging holiday entertainment

### A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM

NORMAN KESSELL

*A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum*, music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, book by Neil Shusterman and Larry Gelbart. Manna Street Theatre, Kilburn, NSW. Opened 16 October 1977.

Director, Martin Benson; designer, Brian Nickless; choreographer, Brian Coughlan; musical director, Philip Scott.

Paulosha, Johnny Lockwood, Proscovia, Jill Howard, Alex Kovacs, Susan, Ray Gilman, Dennis, Barbara Farrell, Marc, Tony Shalinski, Hysteria, Peter Whitford, Lynn, Carli Wade, Tinkabell, Sade Edwards, Patricia, Barbara Farrell, Gynestra, Patricia Howard, Phila, Jennifer McGowan, Errolson, John Larking, Miles Glorious, Peter Meredith.

Today, Stephen Sandherr is the proverbial household name among theatregoers.

His well-publicised visit to Australia earlier this year for the first International Music Theatre Forum, the opening of Sydney's new His Majesty's Theatre with her *A Little Night Music* and now (by final accolade, his name on the marquee in the title of a show, *Side By Side By Sandherr*, have been to that.

It was not always so. When *What's New* first came to the Sydney Theatre in 1961, the program included biographies of original choreographer Jerome Robbins, composer Leonard Bernstein, director Joe Calvo, choreographer Ben Vargus and musical conductor Debra Franks, but lyrical Sandherr cited only a line in the credits.

He found slightly better at composer-lyricist of *A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum* when it opened in Sydney at the old Theatre Royal in 1964, but as was usual at the time, it was the performers who were talked about and remembered.

They were Jack Cummins as Pseudolus, the slave who seeks to earn his freedom by convincing to unite his young master, Holo, played by Jack Gardner, with the slave girl, Phila, played by Geraldine Morrow. Clifford Mallison was Hysennius, the slave of Holo's parents, Senex (Richard Walker) and Domina (Pauline Gurnick) with Bob Hennessy as the fish peddler Lycus, and the late Will Mackenzie as Erastus, a Roman citizen making a son and daughter stolen years earlier by pirates.

Although it was witty and what was in the Western an unusually bawdy look by Rust Sherclowe and Larry Gelbart, it is and a particularly good example of Sandherr's work, though it includes two of those hit mini-frequently used numbers.

The true, however, is right her revival and while Alastair Duncan's new production at Sydney's Malthus St Theatre may lack some of the flair and polish of other musicals he has staged, it offers regaling holiday season entertainment. It is also a good work-up to another successful year by the most enterprising of regional theatres.

True, another *Taxandria's* 'Pavement' is a bit, partly because the casting is less even and the direction less well balanced, but it has been admirably adapted for a smaller company and performance should prove smoother in the run proceeds.

For a start, it has the immensely Johnny Lockwood bringing all his comedy expertise and clowning skills to the marathon role of Pseudolus. He copes well with the difficult task of opening the show single-handed — a duty expertly devised and proposed by the writers which could well be shunned — then proceeds strongly to sustain the night plot. He has the last of a share of Sandherr's tricky lyrics to expound and handles them with admirable clarity and power, especially in the song, "Free".

An even better performance, however, comes from Peter Whitford as Hysennius. His comical timing is impeccable and his singing of the number, "I'm Calm", is the

evening's highlight. Whitford also shares a three-stopping double with Lockwood in the comedy reprise of the song, "Lively", which the night I was there had the audience shouting "More!"

Yvonne Tony Sheldon is excellent as the livestock Holo, but, I found Jennifer McGinley a disappointing Phila, both intrinsically and vocally, remembering her fine performance in the title role of the Old Tote Theatre Company production of Jack Hibberd's *A Taste To Make*. It could not help wondering whether her voice may have suffered from her recent spell in the smoke-filled atmosphere of Sydney's first pubhouse.

Peter Meredith does well as the mighty warrior, Miles Gloriosus, while Reg Gillam scores as Senex and Garry Mendel as Lycus. Especially pleasing are side Jill Howard and Alex Kerekes as the two lone Protestants who reap a wide variety of comic roles.

Designer Brian Buckless' sparse and sparsely using of a street in Rome in front of the houses of Erastus, Senex and Lycus is less imaginative than usual. It also presents little freedom for the pellucid portraits of the final scenes. Even through the central double doors, in particular, seemed fraught with potential disaster. The costumes, concocted by Tony White, fit, on the other hand, excellent.

And once again, as with other musicals at this theatre, the performance owes much to the first-class support (here musical) director Phillip Scan, at the piano, with Greg Scott on bass and Craig Collings on percussion.

## An excellent production

### THE LOWER DEPTHS

JOHN McCALLUM

The *Lower Depths*, by Maxim Gorky, stage version after the translation by Kitty Hunter-Bair and Jeremy Brooks, Old Tote Theatre Company at the Opera House Drama Theatre, Sydney, NSW. Opened 2 November 1977.

Director, Liam Child; assistant director, Rex Cinquaphia; designer, Wilhelmsen; scenic lighting, Jure Laka.

Cast: Keith Parsons, Yvonne, Jennifer Child, Nandita, Kris McQuade, Melvyns, Tom Farley, Popet, Trevor Kent Kleitch, Ralph Costello, Anna Kelly, Laura, Navys, Kate Fargasson, Kathleen, Maggie Kirkpatrick, Barbara, Gordon McDougall, Karen, Ronald Falk, Brian, John Ball Actor, Brian Swan, Luke, Ben Gabriel, Alyson, Dallas Lowe, Tarter, Laurence Hedger, Kreyer Zoh, Chris Gribben performed and various projects, Stephen O'Rourke, Shane Hansen, Sandra

Gross, Seips Tullis, Ben Kestiffe, Patrick Rowe, Scott Griffiths, Jenny Mappin, Trevor Cleary (from 26 November to 3 December inclusive). Simon, Stephen O'Rourke.

The first thing that needs to be said is how good it is that this play has been done. Doubts about the Tote's choice of programme, such as arose from time to time, must be swept away — at least for the time being. The *Lower Depths* is a masterpiece which has not been seen before in Sydney. It is a rich and complex work, dealing with the lives of a group of people living in poverty down and out in a cellar in a Russian slum.

There is one small plot one of the lodgers, Popet, who is having an affair with the landlady, irritates his attention to her younger sister, a woman beset by a dream of consumption while her gambler husband tries to avoid her, a broken down alcoholic some years to get away and start a new life but finally given up in despair.

A great deal seems to happen as the characters waver between reality, happiness, bitterness and bitterness.

Luka, an old pigman, wanders into the cellar, then up the community, preoccupies a number of crises and leaves them all with but no more well off. In theory he tells them (although) lies that will make their miserable lives more bearable, but the only results of his attentions are two broken romances, a murder and a suicide.

Perhaps not quite the only results. At least three characters — Nandita, the streetwalker, the Burns, a fallen aristocrat, and particularly the worldly but desperate Susan — are introduced to a new sense of value in their otherwise rather hopeless lives.

The production, too, is rich and complex, and, again, any doubts about importing past directions from overseas (such as were aired, for example, at the 1977 Playwrights' Conference) must be removed entirely by Liam Child's fine work with the excellent cast. The production is robust and intelligent, full of physical beauty and stimulating, theatrical ideas. Those who know the play will get a sense of this from things like Popet's rather offstage to vomit at Anna's death, the husband Kleitch's moribund howls over the body and Nandita sitting alone while what appeared to be papers out of a paper coat while listening to Nandita's romantic love story. The set is large and complicated, with many levels, and there is a great deal of realism about.

Other interpretative ideas perhaps require some justification. The abandonment of the outside setting in Act III (necessary with this elaborate set) could easily give a lesser production a gloomy realism which this avoids by sheer drive and purpose, and by the set's capacity to take many different planes of action at once.

The Actor wandering around disturbing his possessions among his sleeping comrades before his suicide was almost heavy-handed, as was the affair at the end

between *Kinship* and *Alcohol*. The points made by these interpolations are perhaps unnecessary, but the very fact that they are noticed at all is a tribute to the sensitivity of the production and the constraints it demands.

A play such as this depends a great deal on individual performances, for it is in these that Gorky's marvellous wit (if not humour, for the play is rather gloomy) and sense of consciousness about life manifest themselves. In this cast there is no one who can be faulted, and if it remains a few hours on standing out it is only lack of space that prevents me recommending more.

Kris McGuire as Natasha has a tension which relaxes at times into submission to life, to flare out at the end quite marvellously. Ralph Costello's Kinchik is perfect, and surely his best performance

this year. Kate Ferguson brings to Nanyia an amazing combination of aloofness and vulnerability which is very moving, as is Ronald Falk's final shuffle off the stage, as the Baron, no flatterer. And Brian Syron gives a to me, surprising interpretation of the Actor which is finally an utterly satisfying demonstration of the character.

Two performances which are central must be mentioned. John Bell as Boris (Stavitskiy's part — it must be said) carries what might be called the philosophical weight of the play — and carries it very well. Bell has a sense of the performer about him which doesn't quite fit with the concentrated realism of the play and which only as actor of his intelligence and emotional understanding could make work so well.

The other is Ben Gabriel as Luka, the most important character in the play. Here

I can only be personal and say I found his interpretation too low-key and subdued, lacking in inspirational strength although excellent in detail. Perhaps I expect too much of Luka.

This production has something which we don't see a lot of. It is long and thoughtful and demands attention. I disagree with the emphasis of the programme, which focuses mainly on the director aspect.

What the play offers is a study of values — felt and looked for — in the lives of people whose social conditions serve merely as a dramatic way of focusing attention on how a personal sense of value can be lost or found. There can be no one who views this show sensitively who does not come out of the theatre wiser and more thoughtful, as well as well-informed, and that is one thing among many it is for.



Maggie Kirkpatrick (*Kinship*) and John Bell (*Seize*) in *The Lower Depths* by Maxim Gorky about to be QM Tote Theatre Company's sixth production at the Drama Theatre of the Sydney Opera House for 1971



## Moments of insight among the four-letter words

### SOUTHERN APE

MARGOT LUKE

*Southern Ape* by Bob Clarke, National Theatre Company, Greenroom, Opened 28 October 1977

Director, Andrew Ross

Edgar, Les Layton, Susan, Adele Lewis Magerl, Leith Taylor, David, Peter Fisher, Tom, Joan Brown, Maria, Igor Sae.

As the Playhouse this month it has been possible to study diametrically opposed attitudes to playwrighting. In the main theatre there was *The Brass Hat*, a complex, coldly calculated play, mixing a number of Grotowski ingredients and achieving a slick

allegory. One was not precisely bored, but rather felt underwhelmed by the town that was dished up in the guise of contemporary relevance.

Precisely those qualities threw into stark contrast Bob Clarke's *Southern Ape*, presented in the Greenroom. It is not a good play, but what it attempts is worth doing. It is the playwright's last professional appearance after winning a number of local prizes for earlier work presented by amateur groups.

Clarke has good dramatic instincts but seems to lack judgement concerning specific aims. His play is often and honestly in its aspirations to capture and make comprehensible to an audience (and incidentally himself) the strange world of today's teenagers, a scene which he himself has felt to be "like going to a strange land".

In presenting his young and not quite human primitives (the name *Southern Ape* is taken from Bronowski's explanation of the *Australopithecus*) Clarke was clearly aware that a wider perspective was needed.

Having four characters communicating largely in four-letter words and aggressive finching (snack) or gurgling (dmanak), so matter how acoustically observed, does impose severe restrictions on a playwright.

The counterweights provided are theoretically well suited to the job. They are, firstly, an ageing dropout with the gift of the gab, instantly intimidated by the teenagers, so that he can get close enough to see what is going on, at the same time keeping an adult slant on the events, and their significance. The other adult, a middle-aged migrant with generation-gap problems, is developed in less detail, but carries more dramatic weight and credibility.

The play starts with Edgar, the ageing dropout, introducing himself, and setting many a tooth on edge. If this is supposed to be the spokesman for the adult world, one feels a confusing and rarely understood sense of alienation. His presence is more about and lurid umbrella, talking fanciful rubbish with an elephantine sense of humour reminiscent of 19th century





Australians, but at the same time being thoroughly modern in discussing his family life and living conditions.

In the programme he is introduced as follows: "your master of ceremonies for the evening. I promise a scene only as I see it, for Edgar could be you and me and a composite of the many and various other voices of authority to which our kids are constantly subjected."

Thus it clearly emerges: The fact that he's getting on a bit does not make him an establishment or authority figure. He also remains young, pasty-faced and makes convoluted, philosophical propositions. As a study of a psychological curiosity, as a Benjamin Franklin, he might have some power (except for the fact that he can't match wits with B.F.) but as a choice figure to observe and imitate instead of flatter, not.

Tom's central failure starts the play off on the wrong foot, and serves as an impediment to the kind of balance the playwright is aiming at, and one wonders, after a while, whether a "guide" is necessary anyway.

Because the treatment of the kids is powerful, direct and credible. Drinking their coffee at Tom's cafe they indulge in dialogue that is totally real and totally modern. The girls, giggling with a lot of provocative body-language, tease the young hunk, David, who (as played by Peter Fisher) looks and moves in a startlingly credible manner. The precise capture of children's "I dare you" games and fully-designed sexuality is brilliantly suggested in the programme illustrations, showing the raw sure of a girl in well-filled jeans, worldly svelte heels, and taking a teddy-bear dangling by one of its feet.

The exact blend of phenomena and revealing comment in these scenes probably obscures the precise speech-pattern expert, but of course the endless repetition is necessary to establish poverty of thought and monotony of existence imbedded in these seemingly infernal repetitive permutations of fact, that and just are the moments of insight.

Notable here are the initial clashes between Susan and David, which serves as a prologue to their mating. It is as precise as a game of chess — the physical propple, the moral outrage and sexual pressure (spoken, mother), the giving in, later followed by the sudden gaining of status by both, and eventually the disengagement and return to routine disorientation.

There is also the dialogue between the two girls discussing sexual initiation, which has a refreshing lacuna some of humour, as the two boys (specifically David and first-generation migrant Marcell) discussing Australian attitudes to women. Early hinting out Marcell's black image of a depreviously uniform Australian standing off the way from WA to Queensland without any promise of better things. There is also some relief from teenage banality in the first cautious moves in the relationship between Marcell (the more suburban of the two girls) and Marie,

throwing the helpless inadequacy of communication when more complex problems, such as Marcell's frustrated attempts to assimilate, are touched on.

In the second half of the play, with the purling off, the dramatic possibilities of the young people seem to have been exhausted, and the focus shifts to the figure of Tom, the Italian cafe proprietor. In the first half he had been a backgrounded figure, stereotype Italian, thick accent, short tempered with the customers and too demanding of his son.

In the second half, which starts with a very drunk Edgar attempting to tell a joint at one of Tom's tables, it becomes clear that the lack of understanding between Tom and his son is paying on Tom's mind. Although adamant that Edgar smokes his grass elsewhere, he does see him as a link with the world of the kids, and he opens up, telling Edgar of his frustrations and concerns about the past.

The overt hostility between father and son explodes into open warfare between the generations in a startlingly painful scene a little later. It starts with a routine squabble between Susan and David and when Tom intervenes with his old-fashioned tones of authority, pleading that they be "nice to each other" all that more on him, he has included, at first agreeing with him, then openly ridiculing, and finally turning it into an act of ritual humiliation that is more menacing than any approach with a broken bottle could ever be.

The jump from that scene to Tom's suicide (clearly indicated by a "closed" sign on one of the cafe chairs) is genuinely shocking, as is the appearance of Marcell, stunned, by dope at grief or lust, dressed in European black and accepting the immaculate condolences of the others: "Bummer," they say, with compassion. "Yeah, bummer."

In an epilogue the Edgar figure promotes attention by labelling himself a phony and his comments as "pan-work". This is a fully self-indulgent. If, at a late stage, the playwright realised he had made a mistake, he should have scrapped the thing and started again. As it is, a partially successful piece is finished, potentially of wide appeal, though in this form probably not suited to the small experimental scene.

The play's aims and failures are interesting. It wishes to create a world that is alien to the author, and frustrated him. Ambivalence in his own response to it reveals a safety-valve, or better sense, but the quality of observed observation is more reliable when applied to the "strangers" than to his own situation.

Even so, he uses his characters as figures, rather than people. This does not allow for much interpretation by the actors. Adele Lewis as Susan is the survivor, key-note — tough and sharp. Leah Taylor as Marcell is allowed an area of vulnerability that makes her a potential drug-addict. Peter Fisher's moment; David takes a good deal on the age initiative (more observing, sharp, snail), vainly alternating with cocky aggression and realistically

averted chattering. The two Italians have the most painful parts. Iver Brown, as Tom, is allowed a range of emotion, from helpless misery to the outbreak of a man at the end of his tether, whereas Iyer Son as Marcell has to suggest uneducated intelligence gone sour — the promising student doomed to working in the cafe, unable to shake the "Dag" image, and turning to drugs for solace.

Andrew Bane is a very "physical" director, and it is easy to see why the play appealed to him — the characters express more with their bodies than their vocabulary permits, and it is this aspect of the production that stays most clearly in the mind.

## Doing more than justice to the play

### THE BRASS HAT

HILL DUNSTONE

*The Brass Hat* by Thomas Munchamp  
National Theatre Company at the Playhouse, Perth, W.A.

Director, Anne Neume. Designer, Anne French.

LT Colonel Guy Holden, DSO, MC, Alan Cassell, Charles, Rosemary Bane, Major George Bradley, Robert Faggetter, Private John Brown, MM, Leslie Wright, Major General Charles Anderson-Green, CB, CBE, DSO, MC, (Reid), Geoff Giller.

The production of Thomas Munchamp's *The Brass Hat* at the Playhouse does more than justice, I suspect, to a play which draws heavily on cliché for as few high spots, and which seems oddly safe of the mark in its portrayal of human nature. The play offers the sort of ease and misleading "realism" that Emile Zola so thoughtfully took apart some hundred years ago — misleading because, for all its appearance of documentary and psychological "realism," the play seems to me to be no more than an old-fashioned exercise in Gothic horror.

Its characters have no reality out of their immediate setting, and their psychology can have but limited reference to humanity in general. Director Anne Neume and his cast almost succeed in denying the implausibility of the play, and manage to weld it into a situation drama which catches the attention for the moment, but doesn't bear reflection.

Thomas Munchamp (who in reality is Catherine Lloyd-Thoms) believes, according to the programme note, that "what the hat to say is in the best of her play." I conjecture, therefore, that the play attempts to create a sense of the horrific by a simplifying all human motivation and feeling to sinuous forms of sadistic capacity, and by suggesting a link between the tactics of modern grandiose warfare and the tactics which operate in the private lives of



Robert Barr, Mrs. Lillian Russell and John Feggetter in "National Theatre" The Brass Hat

cerious financial high-ranking military personnel. This idea could, in itself, be quite viable, but the play makes no points kindly and with respect, "verbal", if the play may be entered.

The play raises an issue of private ethics arising out of a triangular relationship in which a Brigadier's wife and his husband are rivals for the heart and mind of the Brigadier. This situation is presented ironically but implausibly, and the writing of the male roles is particularly odd.

The Brigadier, who has the reputation of having been a "murderer," assumes the role of passive victim, which is quite out of character with his past. As well, the heterosexual aspect of this military "message drama" is presented ambiguously and superficially. The relationship between the two men is never clearly defined, so that one is perhaps not supposed to wonder why the husband is suddenly ready to kill to keep his man, and why the wife has waited until the present moment to assert her professional rights over her husband. The situation is deployed through a series of interchanges and scenes "games" which are poorly motivated psychologically, and which are introduced somewhat arbitrarily into the action.

The play also makes much of the conflicting demands of rough justice and mercy in guerrilla warfare, focusing on an scene concerned by the Brigadier and his husband in the war against the Malayan in-

dependents. Again, the play fails to convince. Regimental honour and the British cause prevail over humanity and integrity, and the blame for the atrocity (which is recounted in flashback) is laid on the insurgents and the lower ranks, in particular the Indians.

Oddly enough these same hopes obstructed the marriage of the Brigadier and his wife fifteen years later, when they are on the point of return to Malaysia. I cannot decide whether the author intended this pattern to be taken literally or not.

Despite all this, Aaron Nazari's production is considerably more promising than much we have seen at the Playhouse this year, and some part of this improvement must be due to the stylish presence of Mrs. Barr, who has returned to the Playhouse to play *Clara*, the Brigadier's wife.

Mrs. Barr's performance brings out the calculated beauty of the plot, and her cool understatement carries the dialogue over some very thin patches. The role of Guy Holden, recently promoted to Brigadier, allows Alan Cassell slight scope for his undoubted talent. Robert Feggetter looks a hole in military bearing as Major George Bradley has perhaps just the right sense of precarious morality as the officer who is finally persuaded to sink his conscience in favour of the regimental honour.

Geoff Gibbs, though always an assured and convincing actor, is a little too bland, in my opinion, as the cruel, malicious

rebel General Anderson-Cross, who is, in a sense, the smiling arch-enemy of the piece. Little Wright succeeded in making some of the perplexing parts of the business, Prince John Brown, bringing out sufficient pathos to make the menacing psychological violence of the character acceptable.

Clearly, incompleteness of characterisation is the main weakness of the writing, and this problem did well to concentrate on other elements, notably suspense and plot.

And Feggetter's design for the setting, a gloomy out-of-date drawing room in the Brigadier's quarters, was suitably effective in mood. The instant flash-backs, using angle-like lighting effects with the character back-in in silhouette were admirably handled from the technical point of view, but I found these contrivances to be inconsistent with the apparent realism of the set and action.

One might wonder, finally, why *The Brass Hat* was chosen. Presumably, it was hoped that the play's military morality would appeal to a certain segment of the population and, after all, the play is well enough to pass as "strong meat," and has had a controversial airing elsewhere in Australia. But one wonders that the Playhouse would not branch all at its advantage work to the ray Green Room and abandon the main house almost exclusively to phenomena such as *The Brass Hat*.



## Illyria in the South Seas

### TWELFTH NIGHT

MARGUERITE WELLS

*Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare  
Canberra Repertory at Theatre 3,  
Canberra, A.C.T. Opened 4 October 1973  
Director, Ross McGregor, Original music,  
Andrew Kay, set design, Terry Wootton,  
Coke Viskoch Lighting design, Michael  
Conford

Rep now holds the record for the smallest *Illyria* ever. It is an *Illyria* where the Lady Olivia spends her time sunbaking beside her own sea-shell-banded beach and where the Duke Orsino watches her avidly from the rear house in the coconut grove where he holds sway, (literally), over his island kingdom.

The waves of the ocean, like a series of deep tropical waves French arch, broke up the width of the Theatre 3 acting area, leaving only the revolving stage in the 'island paradise' of *Illyria*, where Sir Andrew Aguecheech lived in a hut in an apartment house and issued his challenges on a despatch typewriter, and where Marvina Fabiana and her cronies bled from their victims and parasites in a kind of coconut palms conveniently bent by various prevailing winds that seem to come from three directions at once, so that they form a very climactic gyration and so run straightway into Orsino's rear house.

It was a brilliant set that solved the problems of the acting area with simplicity, using the full height of the building and kept the action concentrated and compact, where a flur for grandeur, that Rep tends to display, might have splurged it all over the stage. Only the cabaret show, which began the play with a play and took to the coconut ocean, was a coconut which choked a few Duke and 'Oh how sweet!' from the audience and was just a little too quaint.

A revolving island paradise 'with frangipani trees—more coconuts and all looks good from all angles when the cast is hanging from those coconut trees and scrambling up ladders and leaping in chaotic leaps.

Its variety was endless and even if other aspects of the production had not been up to scratch, the interest of this complex and compact set would have gone a long way in salvaging it.

But it didn't need salvaging. If Shakespeare could have found any reason why Orsino's dukedom should not be in a South Sea Island, I couldn't.

When Olivia is a vice (not, totally blind without her glasses, and Marvina Fabiana, in garish pants and naked chamois butterflies, when Marvina is impudent in a plummy P and Orsino's uniform, with yellow stockings and cross patterning of swans, it's all good clean theatrical fun. When Antonio, the devoted friend of the shipwrecked Sebastian, protests his love in super-camp style and when the officers of the law turn up in New Guinea style ceremonial head dresses, one with a

Chinese accent and one with an island accent, though everyone else wears exotic clothing and speaks with Australian-Shakespearean accents, one begins to feel that the good clean fun has got just a little out of hand.

If you can dismiss farm cages of racism and snipers like those, then Ross McGregor's adaptation works. It is extremely well thought out, is each character his own gimmick, complementing or supplementing the text.

Only during the first speech did one have the impression that this was a stream of words rather than a piece of theatre. It was a piece of theatre and a charming one.



Not Marvina (Schwarz) looked to a spar with Sir Andrew (Antonio) in Canberra Rep's *Twelfth Night*.



## A memorable production

### MACBETH

TONY RAEER

*Macbeth* by William Shakespeare. South Australian Theatre at the Playhouse, Adelaide, S.A. Opposed 18 October 1977. Director, Colin George; Asst Director, Ron Sims; Designer, Hugh Colman; Asst Designer, Axel Barts; Choreography and Light scenes, Michael Fuller.

Duncan, Brian James; Malcolm, Donaldson; Porthleff First Macbeth, Edwin Hodgeman; Banquo, Leslie Dayman; Ralph, Craig Ashby; Lennox, Steven Baker; Angus, Kevin Kennedy; Fleance, Michael Frensch; Macduff, Bruce Barry; Son of Macduff, Young Stewart; Colin Firth, English Doctor; Michael Fuller, Scottish Doctor; John Francis, Witches; Kevin Miles, Myra Nabbel; Michael Sibbers, Lady Macbeth; Daphne Gray, Lady Macduff; Helena, Barbara West; Linda, Solheim; Attendants, etc., Michael Fuller, John Francis, Steven Baker, Kevin Kennedy, Michael Frensch, Christine Kennedy.

Adelaide critics nearly died on the South Australian Theatre Company's production of *Macbeth*. The *Advertiser's* Alan Roberts reached for the superlatives, *The Australian's* Peter Ward found fault with the major performances and thought the production "badly and disastrously conceived". Such a divergence of opinion is, in fact, understandable.

Colin George's first Shakespearean production with the SATC is on any reckoning an extraordinary production.

First the setting. The stage is dominated by a huge and black cape or shroud with giant doors that open to allow the entrance of cast, themes, stars and banqueting paraphernalia. It is simple and threatening, apt enough for a play about fate and people who are confused, confused, confused, based on Designer Hugh Colman's conception is an effective one.

Then the costumes. The native Scots wear quilted smocks and versions of kilt-like belted, at other times robes that make them resemble Tartan grandees or shills reminiscent of a Marat-Bade fashion. Duncan is carried around on a chair with parade wings and the witches sport masks that could be Mithras or even African.

The effect is neither as if some of the more sinister aspects of the Adelaide Festival had slipped in two or three months ahead of schedule. It prompted me, however, to remark that the temptation to do Britain would in these circumstances in fact must have been considerable.

Now is the promiscuous only visual. Two of the word masters are word indeed. They are Kevin Miles and Michael Sibbery. The other is a woman Myra Nabbel. They appear throughout the play in other roles, too, as the marionettes and, standingly, the three of them as the porter.

Mr George was an extended text, to my recollection a complete one, and breaks out of his three acts on the first line of Banquo's "that has it now" speech.

Banquo, Leslie Dayman is his best performance for a long time, resumes it from the beginning again after the interval. Like *The Australian's* man I found it all glibbing and, considering the very specific scenes of place, rather silly. But in with any interpretation of Shakespeare there are plays.

George points up Lady Macbeth's line "I have given suck" by introducing a black shrouded cradle with her entrance and he returns the scene at the English court with the carrying of king's and to emphasize the distinction between the severity of rightful succession and the anarchy of usurpation.

But in the end, of course, success or failure depends on Macbeth and his lady.

Edwin Hodgeman, chosen headed for his role, is an excellent actor as his amount critics' award properly recognized. But he is a slight man and, all right there were slight men in 16th century Scotland or Tartary or wherever, he did not seem to me to acquire the grandeur that makes him at the end a truly tragic figure, one who inspires pity though not sympathy.

Also, occasionally or not, this production seemed to concentrate on action (with a series of the comic sequences that are rapidly becoming an SATC hallmark) and to smother the poetry.

The general is there, the specific is there. The poet is missing.

Similarly I was disappointed with Daphne Gray's Lady Macbeth. Her sleepwalking and scene had interest. But its impact was lessened because she had earlier failed to convey the steady resolve that triggers the tragedy. At the start she seemed almost glib.

Since this is Australia's professional theatre journal is more than one scene, it should be noted Bruce Barry's Macduff (a young shill of role from Frank Butler in *Jenny Girl* Year One) for a State treasury company) and Barbara West's Lady Macduff were sound performances. But this was a production and an interpretation that demanded to be taken as a whole. It was a considerable one. But for the wrong reasons.



Daphne Gray (Lady Macbeth) and Edwin Hodgeman (Macbeth) in the SATC's *Macbeth*.



## Competent but not exciting

### DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS

RAYMOND STANLEY

*Desire Under the Elms* by Eugene O'Neill  
Melbourne Theatre Company, Melbourne  
Theatre, Melbourne. Opened 1 November  
1977

Director, Ray Lawler, designer, Tony  
Tripp, dances staged by Sally Cahill.  
Sorenson Cabot, Peter Griffin, Peter Cabot,  
David Dawson, Elsie Cabot, Gary Down,  
Abbas Putnam, Betty Bobbitt, Ephraim  
Cabot, Tony McErmott, musicians, Roy  
Baldwin (farmers), Anthony Hawkins,  
Robert Hewitt and members of the Com-  
pany: a young girl, Sally Cahill an old  
woman, Mona Chase, a Sheriff, Roy  
Baldwin, Deborah, Anthony Hawkins,  
Robert Hewitt

Although Eugene O'Neill is probably  
America's greatest playwright, *Desire  
Under the Elms* — when revised today —  
is far from being his best play. It seems  
strange, therefore, that the Melbourne  
Theatre Company, which hitherto has  
staged only one of his plays (*A Touch of  
the Poet*) — although it did present the Old  
Tenn's *Moon for the Misbegotten* and  
SATC's *Long Day's Journey Into Night* —  
should select *Desire Under the Elms*  
now.

The only justification for mounting a  
production of this play perhaps would be  
to serve as a vehicle for a major talent to  
portray the 70-year old Ephraim or Abbas.  
This obviously is not the situation with the  
present production, in any case, the  
M.T.C. does not behave as a star system  
and selects the plays first, instead of con-  
tracting certain artists and then finding sit-  
uations for them (perhaps one season it  
might try this out and may be surprised at  
the result).

*Desire Under the Elms* (first staged in

America in 1924 with Walter Huston as  
Ephraim) is merely performed. To my  
knowledge London has seen only two  
productions: a club-theatre presentation in  
1931, which did much to launch Flora  
Robson on her illustrious career and had  
Eric Portman as Elms, and in 1940 when  
Beatrice Lohman was Abbas and Elms  
acted by Stephen Murray (later replaced  
by Griffith Jones).

Seeing the play today it is not difficult to  
realise why there appear to have been so  
few productions.

In 1930 the Septuagenarian Ephraim, a  
preaching farmer whose three sons live in  
fear of him — Sorenson and Peter by his  
first marriage, Elms by his second — takes  
a third wife, the plump 25 year old Abbas.

The two older brothers, obviously not  
endowed with intelligence, go off to the  
California gold fields, funded by Elms  
who has discovered their father's hidden  
money hoard. Asserting the farm had been  
his mother's, Elms believes it should now  
be his and so reverts Abbas. It is not long,



Betty Bobbitt (Abbas Putnam) and Tony McErmott (Ephraim Cabot) in  
the Melbourne Theatre Company's production of *Desire Under the Elms*.



Bert Bobbin (Alice Patterson) and Gary Down (John Canoe) in the Melbourne Theatre Company's production of *Under the Elms*.

however, before the two become lovers and a child is born which Ephraim believes to be his. Trained by the old man, Eben is convinced Abbie has stolen him and, when he threatens to leave, to prove her love she smothered their offspring.

O'Neill claimed the play had come to him in a dream, although there are several similarities in it to a play written five years before, *The Rope*. Psychologists have read into it a successful autobiography.

Fifty-three years ago *Steele Under the Elms* was considered shocking and had charges of obscenity brought against it, the charges were dropped but for many years it had the reputation of being an obscene play. Today it is inclined to crack, appear melodramatic and perhaps a little implausible. It would probably now make better viewing adapted to the film or TV medium rather than the stage.

A pity perhaps that director Ray Lawler did not do as he did with the recent production of *Shaw's Pygmalion* and partly worked from the script O'Neill wrote for a silent film version (if the script exists) which was never made and is said to have differed considerably from the play, with Abbie as a Hungarian immigrant (in the 1928 film Sophia Loren was no Italian representation, but it followed the original play).

Possibly the only way of making *Steele Under the Elms* effective today is to play it all stops out — particularly with Ephraim — and not the frightened of melodrama. But then one would require actors who really knew what they are about.

In the early scenes Peter Curtin and David Browne as the elder brothers seemed to have the right idea and were fine, but Gary Down as Eben, Terry McDermott as Ephraim and Betty Bobbin as Abbie — or was it director Lawler? — seemed scared to go all out, so what could have been an exciting evening merely turned out to be only so-so.

The three leads seemed modest and uncomfortable in their roles. Although not actually giving bad performances — they always attained a competent level — any excitement was absent.

There were none of the 'sparkles' which could perhaps have turned it into a memorable occasion.

McDermott in particular seemed more tense and frequently appeared to be talking through his nose and lost most of the poetry in the part. Many of the sub-lines of Abbie eluded Bobbin and one is surprised Sandy Gore — far from the role would seem more suited than some she has acted recently — was not cast. Added to all this, following O'Neill's complex folioy dialect, it was sometimes difficult to follow the words.

Tony Trapp's setting of a two-storied house, with the rooms open to the main one (acting on O'Neill's implicit directions), was quite an innovation in the original production, is quite serviceable, even though it does fit awkwardly as the Atholstan stage. But one would have liked to have seen some other boxes somewhere around.



## A pretty lack-lustre night

### INNER VOICES

DON BATCHELOR

*Inner Voices* by Louis Nowra. La Rose Theatre, Brisbane, Qld. Opened 21 October 1977. Directed by David Bell.

The night I was supposed to be reviewing *Inner Voices* was spent instead in the city watch-tower. Wonderful background, you might say, for a play about the incarceration of Ivan V. Our cast, however, were somewhat different. He was quietly alone, deprived of the stand of any human voice save his own. I was one of more than four hundred people representing a range of opinions about someone living who found themselves suddenly united by a common predicament.

Isolated and shocked as most of us were to find behind bars over the matter, we were sustained by a rare sense of togetherness that transformed anger into a sort of silence. Our experience was the very antithesis of the hell of separation usually suffered by Ivan in the play.

Still, a moment or two looked forward to the play with special interest. I had read Rex Crawford's comparisons with Calderon's *La Pinta Encarna* (which I do not know) and Hamlet's *King Lear*, and was prepared for intellectual stimulation. In the end there was growing irritation at the evening progressed partly because of the false expectations, partly with the play far not adequately synthesising its disparate elements, partly with the production far being so banal, and, largely with the ease for making much of the script incomprehensible.

In the matter of false expectations, the fault is, of course, my own. No play should be judged on anything but its own terms. I acknowledge the error by way of a warning to those who might otherwise wonder by the end of Act I, how so simple yet effective a piece of narrative theatre could ever be the subject in comparison with Hamlet's *King Lear*.

What happens in *Inner Voices* is that the whole first half is little more than exposition, that, in the second part, there is a bombardment of events and an expansion of the scenes. Not only does the narrative element go into top gear, but the style and bearing of the play is all altogether a new and more philosophic order.

The demands of the second half while not stringent, are not satisfactorily prepared for. Once you adjust to the change that is by far the better and most successful part. It is a dramatic illustration of the way our minds are invaded by forces from outside which are soon transformed and take up residence as inner voices.

Just as Ivan fails to grasp the clearly false information fed to him by his "instructors", and misleading influences of characters like Princess Ali, so are we, as a society, slaves of received experience. Furthermore, the chaos of lies, and half-truths soon produces confusion. Even if we silence the outer voices, as Ivan does by cutting out the tongues of his "instructors", the inner voices do not cease their clamour. When he craves his agency "I want to understand" he is beginning to realise that the voices inside are not "my voice" — they cannot be commanded or dismissed. All we can do, as he accepts at the end, is listen.

A feature of the play which I found difficult to integrate was a sort of contemporary Australian aura which had something to do with the actual words, and something to do with the rhythms of the people. This effect was compounded by the performers who relaxed into the idiom to the degree that it became a statement of its own.

The Australian cast of the characters and of the actors does not at all deny the alien and quasi-mythical atmosphere surrounding the threat of Imperial Russia. It puts the fascinating (if fictionally) story off-kilter, and makes no contribution to the main universal effectiveness of the second act. It will also be an aspect of the text which non-Australian productions will find obscure. In an otherwise international play this seems a pity.

What does work very well are the flashes of high theatricality — Ivan being captured into hearing Marlow's name, the self-caravans, the gator figure, the scene with Butley Face. They were handled well in this production. It fell down, however, by being over-technically glib and cold. What I like to be free of humour in the second scene, for example, were not explored, and there was little spirit in the second interregnum sequence. Hardly a laugh was raised all night, which made it all too heavy.

The performance did not help. They were too monochromatic. Gary Cook played Ivan at a level of unengaged neutrality that was finally exhausting, to watch Peter Whalley's Marlow looked wonderfully wild and young, but was physically

limited to a few flapping gestures and so visibly cheated as to be often incomprehensible.

As Butley Face, Kay Perry gave a welcome injection of vitality and colour in a portrayal that ranged between sentiment and bewildered apprehension. Her Princess Ali, depicted not like a tart and flourishing a too bad French accent, was over-blown. The rest of the team gave efficient support without managing to make much of their parts. It must be admitted that with no more than twenty people in the house, it would be no easy matter to sparkle.

What with one thing and another it was a pretty lack-lustre night. All the time I was inclined to dismiss the whole thing. On cooler reflection I can see that the play, though flawed in a considerable achievement with abundant theatrical appeal, a stirring story line, and a gripping reflection to make on the way words which have the power to act in fact, can also bend us so firmly that we can never escape.

## Butley (unfortunately) strikes again

### OTHERWISE ENGAGED

RICHARD FOTHERINGHAM

*Otherwise Engaged* by Simon Gray. Queensland Theatre Company, 5610 Theatre, Brisbane, Qld. Opened 26 October 1977.

Director, Alan Edwards, Designer, Peter Cooke.

Scenic Design, John Krammell, Dore, Peter Korda, Stephen Heath, David Channing, Jeff Golding, Ben Anagnostis, David Saunders, Phil Bishop, Wood, Russell Newman, Brith, Eric Wilson.

Only great and devoted caring has enabled me in a road now having to be stuck in a theatre with Simon Gray's *Butley* — a play which University English departments delight in reading and studying in order to prove that greater self-indulgence hath no risen than they. I did, I must confess, succumb to the film (well it was half of a double bill) and for about ten minutes I even enjoyed it. After that it was like being locked in a room for 2½ hours with the main purpose and boring English tutor I can imagine. So discovering that Simon Black in *Otherwise Engaged* was

Don Bailey revealed was not an encouraging way to begin an evening conversation.

Ben Bailey is a one-dimensional character, a man who talks to casual emotion rather than to passion, and who is at the end of the play driven into some kind of self awareness. He has one verbal trick which he indulges in until we are screaming up the wall — the deliberate misunderstanding.

Joey, Ray is his name

Ben: 'Who's mine?'

Joey: Ted's

Ben: Ray is Ted's mine?

Joey: Is the one you call Ted in the one I call Ray?

Ben: He calls himself Ray too

Ben: How sweet

What Hamlet gives Bailey is the fact that the other major characters are more aware and self-aware than Bailey is. His wife Anne is just brilliant when it comes to the verbal game, and is brutal in her determination to escape from this sick world of slick and empty verbiage. Joey, his boyfriend, who drops out of Bailey's life, recognising that this way madness lies. Boring, mean, and trivial though it undoubtedly is, Bailey at least gave me a suggestion that it was possible to find one's way out of the labyrinth of language into some kind of sanity and human reality.

Simon March is *Offshore Engaged*'s last of Bailey's lamentable defences, (the truth concerning verbiage and the one joke) and little more. Only the job (book publisher rather than English lecturer) has been changed tactically to camouflage us that life exists in the corpse. The plot is similar, except that in this new script the actions of escape have closed up. March starts and finishes by playing Wagner to himself, and offers not one word to suggest that any self-knowledge has been achieved (ah, but that's English understatement for you). The same wife (sorry but that's how we are made to see her) has a similar problem but has retreated from dreaminess into confusion. The other characters are equally unable to act, with despondence and words being two of the results.

The script in short strikes me as one of the most obvious pieces of crap I've come across. The brother Stephen and the lodger Dave have no star lines that are better than drivel, and the scene where Stephen tells Simon of Simon's wife's affair with another man would be rejected by any editor at Mills and Boon.

The dramatic construction is an endless series of dialogues leading to that most hackneyed resolution in modern English drama — the house in which everything goes wrong, it not only rains but pours, the chickens come home to roost, and similar clichés.

It's a technique that's both manipulative and dishonest, urging us to sympathise with a stage character for whom we have been urging a quick and decent death. Plot developments are telegraphed like a lead pencil (the scene where the husband and wife talk actually wouldn't have been had if we hadn't guessed about an hour

previously that she was pregnant). Add to this sub-Biancary Blank jokes about keeping one's end up, flaring during an interview, and sucking on the proffered breasts of the bitchy lady, and we finish up with a decadent mess which not even well written

The QTC production does little to help. It's a classic example of Australian actors trying to imitate the damaged witty cynicism of the Brecht and Brechtling up with a style closer to porridge than to lary flou.

Dave Clendinning, a very fine actor who's outstanding portrayal of Mr Pagan in *The Season at Sarsaparilla* I forgot to mention last issue) founders desperately as the brother Stephen. Peter Kewada gave us his great Hollywood radical, and the other minor characters were angularly dreadful, although as Pat Bishop's man I suspect it's the way the role of the fuck and rack lady is written (with obligatory biased brevity) that made it impossible for anyone to come out of it with a clean conscience.

John Krumholz as Simon succeeded apologetically in achieving a lightness of

tone, but fell into the consequent trap of offering us an A to B emotional range, only in the key encounter with his wife Ray. Was there some complicity of usurious Kate Wilson did her best with Beth but again Gery's writing of the female role is cardboard thin.

Most enlightening perhaps is that the QTC has demonstrated the not over-large and not over-enthusiastic audience was thinking that the rubbish to at least acceptable, (the end up joke and the hated breasts were amongst the best of the night). As an English actor (farmer than most) used to me recently, "In our English department they usually believe that their little world is some kind of microcosm of the universe".

The same seems to be true of devotees of Bailey, *Offshore Engaged*, and the current QTC offerings. And in Queensland where adultery is undoubtedly the greatest problem our society faces, how else could you describe *Offshore Engaged* but as the QTC blurb does: "A very funny dog at the nation system".



Pat Bishop (Dave) and John Krumholz (Simon) in the QTC's *Offshore Engaged*



# GUIDE

## VICTORIA

**ARENA CHILDREN'S THEATRE** (03 924 6647)  
 Touring primary and secondary schools with  
 the *Seamus Heaney The Travelling Pantomime*  
*Winkles Snow and Money, the Root of all*  
 Evil (to Dec 15) *Workshops 10.30am to noon 2*  
*to 4 pm 19 to 23 Dec)*

**AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING** (083211P  
 (02 7171)  
 The Soap Box Circus Christmas extravaganza  
*Smashdown!* by Bob Daly, Carol Potter and  
 Richard Murphy. Music by Matthew Green  
 (ongoing)

**COMEDY THEATRE** (03 5211)  
*Sole to Sole* by Geoff Hume with Jill Perryman  
 and Noel Farrow (continuing)

**THE HOOPLA FOUNDATION**  
 Playhouse Theatre (03 4883)  
*Everyman* Theatre presentation of *The Polar*  
*Bear* by Colin Ryan (to 18 Dec)  
*Hamock's Last Walk* by Heathcote  
 Williams. Featuring Bruce Myles. Directed by  
 Graham Murdoch (continuing, Thurs, Fri, Sat,  
 at 11 pm, also 5.30 pm)

**LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT**  
 (03 9424)  
*Back to Back* Street with Endy Krupic (con-  
 tinuing)

**LA MAMA** (03 9303)  
 People's Productions. *Tomatoe* by Roger  
 Packer, directed by Malcolm Robertson (to 19  
 pm 1 to 18 Dec)  
*Grease Productions' Snoged*, or "B" rated  
 puppet show directed by Bart Cooper (to 30  
 pm 1 to 18 Dec)

**MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY**  
 (03 1 000)  
 Antichrist  
*Jesus Under the Stars* by Eugene O'Neill  
 Directed by Ray Lister. Directed by Tony  
 Trapp (to 10 Dec)  
*Ang. About the Moon* by Jean Anouilh  
 Adapted by Christopher Fry. Directed by John  
 Selman, designer, Anne Fraser (from 13 Dec)  
 Russell Street  
*Cat On' by Cliff Green. Directed by Paul*  
*Kato, Staged by Steve Natus (continuing)*

**FILIPPO PUPPET THEATRE** (03 9303)  
*A Ring a Rose and The Butterfly Song* (to 17  
 Dec)

**PLAYBOX THEATRE** (03 4870)  
**MARIONETTE THEATRE OF**  
**ALBERTA**  
*Richard Brahm and His Shadow Puppets*, a  
 one man show (from 9 Jan)

**PRINCESS THEATRE** (03 2915)  
*M. W. S. Playhouse and Co. of Box with Dennis*  
*Giles, Jane Brooks, Thomas Edwards and*  
*David Greenwood. Directed by Anna*  
*Cooksey. Musical director, Terry Vaughan*  
*(continuing)*

**VICTORIA STATE OPERA** (01 5860)  
*Page & Johnson & Kings on The Three Crows*  
*of Fenchale Page, by Peter Narrows* (con-  
 tinuing on schools tour, Melbourne metro-  
 politan area and Victorian country circuits) (3  
 Dec)

**WINDSOR REGIS THEATRE**  
**RESTAURANT**  
*Brother's Sister* musical written by Challenge  
 and Marx, with Robert Jones, Julian Archer,  
 Ken Challenge, Collette Marx and Adele Coxson  
 (continuing)

**TWELFTH NIGHT** (02 1889)  
*Something to Tell* by James MacDonald  
 David Voss and Robert Gerlach. Director, John  
 Whaley, designer, Jennifer Caroll (to 10  
 Dec)  
*Pharmazone* by Paul Collins (to 10 Dec)

## N.C.T.

**CANBERRA PLAYHOUSE** (02 4243)  
*Small and the Night Vision* Gary Sagers (3  
 Dec)  
*Tempe Theatre. The Bell and the Ring* musical  
 (5-10, 12-17 Dec) Patrick's Matinee (18-23  
 Dec)

**CANBERRA THEATRE** (02 6211)  
*Canberra Opera* (to 10 Dec)  
*Optimal and Eureka (Black)* 1 and 2 Dec  
*Conductor* Donald Haller (producer, John  
 Tinker, designer, Mark Wager)  
*Old Fashioned Variety Show* (17 Dec)

**HERSCUS THEATRE RESTAURANT**  
 (02 3111)  
*Circle of a Lifetime* by Ben Pomeroy and John  
 Mykelti. Directed by Jason Hutchins with  
 Robert Coopers, Greg Williams and Deborah  
 Gordon (continuing)

**LARGESIDE HOTEL THEATRE**  
**RESTAURANT** (02 6344)  
*We're Just Good Friends* musical dinner/show  
 directed by Jason Hutchins, starring Mary Fin-  
 chon, Winston Williams and Frank Jones (con-  
 tinuing)

**THEATRE THREE** (02 4222)  
*Connelly* by Alexander Dumas. Directed by Ross  
 McGregor (to 17 Dec)

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

**Q THEATRE** (022 3621)  
*Joe Eyre* adapted by Betty Gault. Directed by  
 Jane Marshall (Wed - Sat, 7-11 Dec)

**LITTLE THEATRE**  
*Glad's Theatre. Play or More* story by Ken Ross  
 and *Three Were One* or *Three Steps* by Steve  
 J. Spence (to 2 Dec)  
*Tragedy* (with *Shady* written and directed by  
 David Allen (7-10 Dec)

**SOUTH AUSTRALIAN THEATRE**  
**COMPANY** (01 3115)  
*Playhouse. A Happy and Holy Occasion* by  
 John O'Donoghue. Directed by Ross Hall,  
 designed by John Carver (to 17 Dec)

## QUEENSLAND

**ARTS THEATRE** (06 3344)  
*East Express* adapted and directed by James  
 Savage (to 24 Dec)  
*Pygmalion* Game by Max Aitler and Terry Ross.  
 Director, Steven Philip (up to 31 Dec)

**CANBERRA** (06 6361) at the Arden Theatre  
*Moyle* by Peter Anouilh and *A Night's Work* by  
 Harold Pinter. Director, Connel Hartley (to 10  
 Dec)

**HER MAJESTY'S**  
*Arabian Nights*, *Carmina* (Rome) in French 1  
 Dec, 3 Dec (past). Conductor, Russell Channell  
 producer and designer, Tim Lippard. With  
 Paula Pils or Margaret Elton, Ron Stevens or  
 Donald Silah  
*Pathe* (Bentley) in German 3 Dec (past)  
 Conductor, William Reed, producer, John  
 Copley, designer, Allen Lees. With Lane  
 Koppel-Winter. Ronald Dowd

**LA BOITE** (06 1921)  
 Times by a writing team including Richard  
 Faithfull, Graham, John O'Toole, Rick  
 Birmingham, John Bradley and Lorna Bell (to 18  
 Dec)  
*Mist of Steel*, a Middle Sagers Production (to  
 6 Dec)  
*Big Feet* 1 of the ECDP Australian Heritage  
 Productions (to 9 Dec)

**QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY**  
 (01 5175)  
*Conjurings* by Alan Ayckbourn. Director,  
 Murray Fox. Designer, James Greenwood. With  
 Pat Bittop, John Krummel, David Clenden-  
 ning, Kate Wilson, Russell Newman (to 12  
 Dec)

**THEATRE ROYAL (210 0000)**

*Agnes of Shrewsbury* Peter Hall by J M Barrie.  
(12 Nov — 12 Dec)  
Alban Drom Company (U), 14 Dec

**IRISHMANIAN PUPPET THEATRE**

(21 594)  
*Woman's Aisle Menus Show* by Peter Wilson  
Directed by Nigel Triffin (14 Dec)

**WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**CLUB THEATRE RESTAURANT**  
(277 4100)

*The Cheesecake Show* with Max Kite, Alice Dale and Peter Dean (1 Dec — 5 Jan)

**HOLE IN THE WALL (281 2024)**

*Onassis* directed by Edgar Maclellan (from 2 Dec and continuing)

**PLAYHOUSE (215 1000)**

*Cold* directed by Barry, Garry and Stephen  
Directed by Aarne Ruoms with Joan Sydney  
(1-31 Dec)

**NEW 500 THE WALLS**

**ACTION 500 COMPANY (298 2201)**

*No Man's Land* by Harold Himel directed by  
Stanley Gelfand with Alexander Scibilia (to  
16 Dec) *The Adventures of William Byrd* by  
Peter Tanton directed by Marie Somers (from  
26 Dec)

**ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH  
WALES (21 66 11)**

*The Daily Woodhead Real Puppet Workshop*  
(continuing on primary schools into Sydney  
metropolitan area, to 16 Dec) *Modern Water*  
Theatre (continuing on primary schools into  
Sydney, New England and north coast districts to  
16 Dec) *White McClellan* (old songs and  
gossamer (touring out of New South Wales to 24  
Dec, Hunter and north coast, 2 to 7 Jan)

**AUSTRALIAN THEATRE FOR YOUNG  
PEOPLE (299 1122)**

*Shoals*, by Richard Tullock with Jan Collins  
and Ray Anderson (touring primary schools,  
Wollongong, south coast, Riverina districts of  
NSW in association with Arts Council of  
NSW to 16 Dec)  
*Broadsides at 911 D.A. (Broadways, 12 to 16  
to 16 Jan, in and out of port)*  
*Summer-time Youth Theatre*, for age group 12  
to 20 (city to 8-12 Dec, from 9 Jan)

**BALMAIN BRICK (22 0094)**

*Let Me People Dance*, music and lyrics by Earl  
Wilson (a original production by Phil Gosses  
mus, Australian production by Peter Barry  
(continuing)

**ENSEMBLE (229 8971)**

*The Prisoner of Seville* (directed by Neil Simon,  
directed by Hayes Gordon, with Bruce Young  
(12 to 1 Dec)

**GRANDMAN (217 8024)**

*in West Woodhead* by Oscar Wilde directed  
and designed by Peter Hickey (to 10 Dec)  
*Little Women*, by Louisa May Alcott directed  
and designed by Margaret Knecht (from 17  
Dec)

**HER MAJESTY 5 (212 9411)**

*A Chance Love* original production conceived,  
choreographed and directed by Michael  
Bennett with choreographer Ruth Aron, music by  
Barry Karpwood and Nicholas Gosses, music by  
Marion Mankach lyrics by Edward Nelson  
choreography and direction conceived for  
Australia by Sydney Lee and Jeff Hamble  
(Oct 30 to 17 Dec)

**KILLARA AND COFFEE THEATRE**

(299 7172)  
*Around the World in 80 Minutes* (to 10 Dec)  
and directed by John Horne (continuing to  
New Year's Day)

**MARION STREET (295 3166)**

*Of Fools*, Telling, *Wagoners on the Way* to the  
Furrow, music and lyrics by Stephen Hamilton,  
book by Bart Shandson and Larry Gifford,  
directed by Adrian Duncan with Johnny  
Lockwood in Christmas

**MARIONETTE THEATRE OF  
AUSTRALIA (217 1631)**

*Is Lingo and the Dragon* a national production  
by Norman Hollingsworth formerly based on  
the traditional Muppet's play (continuing till  
Sydney Opera House, 14 and 21 Jan)

**MUSIC HALL THEATRE RESTAURANT**  
(298 1122)

*Just for Power or Peace in Pantomime*,  
written and directed by Michael Biddy (con-  
tinuing)

**MUSIC LOFT THEATRE RESTAURANT**  
(298 4221)

*The Gloria Davis Show* produced by William  
Gri (continuing)

**NEW BONAPARTE THEATRE  
RESTAURANT (251 2123 or 251 2596)**

*Just Jane Who?* written, choreographed and  
directed by Maggie Martin (continuing)

**NEW THEATRE (219 3400)**

*Caprice* of Kiprecht by Carl Zuckmayer  
adapted by John Mortimer designed by Jack  
Lory, designed by Rodolph Shaw (to mid  
December)  
*The Prisoner of St. Malo*, a topical musical  
adapted by Mona Brand and John Upson (from  
mid December)

**NIMROD (29 5003)**

*Upstairs The Club* by David Williamson,  
directed by John Hill, designed by Tom Bannan-  
man with Jeff Ashley Drew Fingleton Stan  
Cuthbert, Ron Hindrich, Peter Kato, Barry  
Lynch (to 8 Jan)

*Rocky* by Tim Goodwin, directed by  
Richard Whittall, designed by Brian Thompson  
with Kim McQuade, Jack Weaver, Robin  
Ramsay, Tony Littlejohn (from 14 Jan)  
*Downstairs* (to 16 Dec) *Rocky* directed  
by Kim Harker, with John Gyles, Caroline  
Tanner, Suzanne Rayburn, Alan Becker (to 2  
Dec)

*Stand on Sydney Harbour*, set to be the classic  
*Tourists of the World* (to 16 Dec) *Rocky* directed  
by Kim Harker, with Suzanne Rayburn, directed by Kim  
Harker, designed by Larry Kaufman (from 2  
Jan)

**NO 16 THIFATRE RESTAURANT, 20  
Koonara (298 6313)**

*41 Caprice*, *Rocky*, *Party* by Pat Gentry  
designed and produced by Pat Gentry, choreog-  
raphy by Keith Little, set by Doug Anderson,  
costumes by Ray Wilson (to New Year's)

**OLD TOTE (265 6121)**

*Opera Theatre* *Opera House* *The Lower*  
*Deck*, by Maxine Clarke, directed by Louis  
Collins designed by Helene Stierman with John  
Bell, Ronald Falk, Bruce Soren, Ron Oatard,  
Jennifer Chase, Barry Lucas, Kim McQuade,  
John Fraser (to 30 Dec)  
*The Toppers*, by William Somerset Maugham directed  
by Ted Craig, designed by Brian Williams and  
Hugh Culbert with Michael Craig, Jon Wong,  
Ray Dupuis, James Cusack, Ralph Corbell  
Celia de Bough, Rayford basal (from 31 Dec)  
*Parade Theatre* *Opera House* *Opera House* *Small*  
*Space* by Ian Stock and Robert Trevor Long  
designed by Tony Tapp, directed by Rodney  
Fisher with Lady Clarke, Michelle Fordson,  
John Larkin, Ned Andren, Ross Thompson (to  
5 Jan)

**OSCAR'S HOLLYWOOD PALACE  
THEATRE RESTAURANT, Sans-Souci**  
(28 4415)

*The Glass Shoes*, directed and written by Gary  
Dover and Jon Polinsky, directed and staged  
by Jon Polinsky (continuing to New Year's  
Day)

**PLAZA THEATRE Bondi Junction**  
(298 5877)

*Show the Door Lightly* by Chris Beach-Loss  
directed by Peter Williams (to 16 Dec)

**Q THEATRE, French (247 21 5712) (The  
Museum of Modern Art)**

*Curry* designed from original material by Max  
Gifford directed by Ron Blackett, designed by  
Arthur Clarke (to 21 Dec)

**ST JAMES PATHOLGE (212 6576)**

*Overalls*, a children's pantomime devised and  
produced by Peter Williams (from 2 Jan)

**SYDNEY CENTRE (260 0155)**

*Overalls*, *The Great Adventure* a full-length  
musical comedy musical show created and  
directed by Philip Anderson with 125  
musicians (from 2 Jan)  
*Overalls*, *Overalls*, by Paul Foster directed  
by Geoffrey Brown (from 4 Jan)

**SPEARHEAD THEATRE RESTAURANT**  
Kempsey (260 7441)

*The Gold Rush* directed and designed by  
Gordon Roberts (to Christmas)

**SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE (200 0)**

*Macbeth* (The Sydney Experiment) an  
audio-visual adventure devised by Mike Stelfox  
(continuing)

**THEATRE ROYAL (210 4011)**

*The 9th and 49th Jan*, by David  
Gifford, Q May, musical direction, Michael  
Tunstall, choreography, Jiffy Flanagan design-  
Edward Palmer with John Gyles, Caroline  
Tanner, Suzanne Rayburn, Alan Becker (to 2  
Dec)

**WHITE HORSE HOTEL, Newcastle (21 2331)**

*A Jubilee Show*, by Rick Mayer, Thomas  
Kathy, Peter Simon and Michelle Pinsky,  
directed by Ian Tucker, designed by Peter  
Tucker and Susan Pinsky (to Christmas)

Playscript.

JACK



Jim McNeil

# JACK



The play is set inside various NSW jails: a cell at Parramatta, the "CBS" section of Long Bay & finally at the maximum security jail at Grafton.

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## ACT TWO

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*The CBS is the psychiatric observation section at Long Bay Jail. It is a prison within a prison where prisoners are treated like pigs. Also men of unsound mind are kept there while awaiting their court appointments, pending they are on capital charges. The doctors make reports upon their mental condition and these reports are used in the courts as their trials. Unqualified warden are empowered to prescribe tranquillising pills — to force them upon any one arrival — and any prisoners or introduced to The Biscuits Jack, was say the victims not only of their mental troubles but also of a system that requires doctors to enjoy themselves.*

*In the CBS the prisoners are kept in cells by night and a common yard by day. In the yard are cages, in the cages men who are considered not ready to walk the yard. It is very much like a zoo. On the concrete one may see men lying like dogs around a*

*poisoned waterhole. Men being delirious with drugs, while others with steady up and down waiting perhaps to see a doctor or some hygienic chaplain or the next medical search from a nurse, or simply for the time to be locked again in their cells where the lights are always on and darkness becomes a privilege to be begged for but never granted. Men are strapped naked outside their cells and ordered to put on their pyjamas from which the water cords have been removed. They are locked in with a bat, a rubber push-bowl and a loud speaker system that blares unspeakable music through the windows. If you're not dead when you get there, it won't take too long.*

*The CBS Section Long Bay Jail. The Warden stands alone in center stage.*

*Warden: I am the King and this is my cast.*

*On One day — you never know — you may be arrested on a capital (?) charge, in which case you'll be committed to my care while the doctors prepare a report upon your mental condition. I'll be here to look after you like a mother — with these (holds up a bottle of pills) and with this (holds up a baton).*

*Of course I have others who come to see me. Sometimes, I know, there are work-gated prisoners who can't handle the few miserable pains they've been sentenced to. They crack up, they behave like the screeching rats they are — and they are therefore loaded into one of our comfortable wagons and sent here for observation. The doctors are very often fooled by their tricks and their wares. (sneering) No, not me, I'm never fooled. I can't be, because I know that all prisoners are rats that ought to be trapped. All of them! All of them! Trapped like rats! (sneers his head) — and speaking of rats*

Just, answer slowly, on stage. (Shifts nervously and hands off) shuffling back- ing down

Wander: Hello, hello, hello

Jack: Hello

Wander: Don't answer back. Where have you come from?

Jack: From Paramount.

Wander: Paramount? Who?

Jack: Paramount Sir

Wander: Sir. That's right. Sir. Why are you here?

Jack: They put me in, sir — Sir

Wander: Obviously. Take these. (He takes pills from the basket)

Jack: (Hesitantly). What are they?

Wander: You don't know what they are?

Jack: No

Wander: Oh, well don't be too disappointed. You're really a new assistant. You get another chance to win a prize — can you tell me what this is? (He weighs the basket on Jack)

Jack: It's a basket Sir

Wander: Gang! Wrong! You don't win the cup to sunny Graham. No, this is not a basket at all. It is actually a gold dish. I play a lot of gold. It is real in fact, that I'm the only man in Sydney able to strike out balls with one stroke — are you able to believe that? Would you prefer a demonstration? Would you rather care to question these without question?

Jack: (shyly) yes and is allowed the pills

Wander: Fine. Open your mouth again (he puts into Jack's mouth) — When I tell you 'swallow' — good, all gone. Jump off! Oh! but of course you can't, can you? Hold on out — here we are. (He removes the hands off from Jack) Now step — squatty squatty!

Jack: Must I?

Wander: Get it off!

Jack: No

Wander: No!

Jack: I'm all right

Wander: I said jump — jump

Jack: I can't! I can't! No! You want me to be used. I'm not used

Wander: You're in a prison

Jack: So

Wander: So you'll be when you're told

Jack: No! No more! No

The Wander slowly walks Jack, who backs away from the threat of the wapping device

Jack: You've got no right

The Wander steps as though surrounded

Wander: No right? — (he points to his cap) as his name is his uniform — no his boss? What do you think that is? And this? And that? And that? Hey —

They're RIGHT! They have to be! And where do you think you are? Prison? You're a prisoner and you're wrong! I AM the Right! The only Right! — Stop! Stop! Jack slowly steps off the overall

The Wander comes like a thief in the night

Wander: Get into them (Jack gets into the pyjamas, holding up the pants by hand) Now into a cell you need husband —

Must! That way! March! (He shows Jack's backside with the basket driving him off the stage as the light goes down)

My light goes up again and The Wander back on stage

Wander: Well, you see what I mean — that was one of them. A fat, a middleman, a dangerous man — My job is to protect you from things like that. And I do. I look 'em up where you never need to see 'em or know 'em. You — And — how happen? I'll tell you what happens — the bloody doctors and men in purple officers let 'em out! They — let — them — out? They do? They let 'em out — run — and what happens? They rob you again, they come back again and I have to start all over again — putting numbers on 'em and going through the whole bloody process of teaching the bastards their place again — not that I really mind, you got used to it after a while — like anything else. You got used to it really, if you study the rules and keep up with — good morning Doctor

The Doctor comes on into a table, nodding to the Wander, taking papers from his bag and planning through them

Doctor: There is a complication

Wander: I've just looked him in

Doctor: I'll see him now

The Wander nods, glances, goes off to get Jack. The Doctor watches The Wander go

(aside)

JACK



Doctor: He's annoyed. They're always annoyed when I come to see a prisoner. They can't see any point to it. Neither can I tell the time, can you? (He picks up papers, waving about) Take this one, for instance

Jack: whatever his name is — according to this report, he threatened to do to his cell-mate. And what am I supposed to do about that? Why, did he want to kill? Will he tell me if I ask him? And if he does will it be the truth? And if it is the truth, will it help me to help him? Who knows (laughs) that it's a long, it's a long far as all — well, nearly all. Never mind. My own concern is the application of the healing art to mental diseases — that and nothing more. But a thousand thanks in the particular instance. I would fix this one perhaps, but then what? He will be returned to the place from whence he came, as they say, and the trouble whatever it is will be on again. It's a little like treating a man who's fallen from a roof and then throwing him all again

Jack comes on, shamed forward by The Wander

Wander: Stand there

Doctor: You may sit down. That will be all, thank you, officer

Jack sits down. The Wander turns off completely

Wander: Now then, Jack, is it? What seems to be the trouble?

Jack: I've got nothing in my

Doctor: No complaint is

Jack: No complaint, sir

Doctor: Ah, but according to the report we seem to have been troubled with a complication — That's your friend with whom it will help

Jack: (shakes head)

Doctor: I'll have you looked if you talk to me like that. One of my personal peculiarities is that I simply hate being told to get looked

Jack: (shakes head)

Doctor: I was in boarding school

Jack: Oh

Doctor: There. I've told you a secret. Now it's your turn. I want to help

Jack: Can you send me home?

Doctor: You know I can't

Jack: Well, got looked

Doctor: Officer! (He stands at The Wander marches on) The prisoner is not prepared to co-operate at this stage. We shall try again in a week. Meanwhile make it. Try-ranched three times daily. He has a definite personality defect. I should think a private at this stage to allow association with the others. Keep him in a cage for now. I mean by day of course. Well I'll be off. They met at each other. The Doctor leaves. The Wander mutters Jack to get up. Jack stands and waits

Wander: Sir — we're not going to be co-operated! (He pushes Jack backwards) We're going to be uncomfortable — are we?

(He tells Jack on the arm with his elbow) — are we? — answer me! (he shows Jack a row with open hand)

Jack: You haven't animal

Wander: Animal? No! (smiles) But how can I be the animal? Who's going to be kept in a cage? You or me? Who's going to be aged with a pro-pot and a bowl of water — you or me, you looking at it? — water? (Another bell work the door) And who is going right now to his little cell, with his little rubber pro-pot and the light that never goes off as we can watch the rat all the time (A clock) — WHAT? Who is the animal? You haven't even got a name any more, you looking dog? (He shows Jack in the floor muttering as they alternately walk for hours as the light goes out) Darkness. The sound of the flopping Jack crying

Lighter up

Jack stands holding up his shoes with one hand. (He comes to a halt at the window back (Hesitantly) Where the looking bell are? Where the looking bell are you? You're not having yourself a good good meal now or when? You're at the picture, or some looking where — I choose

I choose — I choose how the cat happens. How can you just go to the pictures and let it happen? How can I you know that it's here? How can't you stop what's happening to me? Come — you're criminals — what's the Festival of Looking Light? (sings) — where are you? Mr

Muggin' factor—trickin'—apparently tonight on the wily today? You ought to be here. I only have to open my hand and my penis'll fall down and everyone will see my prick and you'd have cause to complain about this particular section of the community. You could go on tillly and all. Pricks—don't open your rotten eyes or you might see me and I couldn't shut be

Jack sits down abruptly and jabs jlegs. He gets up again and roams the cell. His penis up his pants-hole. Everyone is staring at it like wild. Stares again at the window and starts again to abuse the world outside. Do you know I'm here? Do you get a fuck where I am? No—no, you don't get a fuck where I am. Pricks. Demurely. You and y window— you and y bars. You in your little—pricks— y make a fuss about Russ. Pricks. Dogs. Some

Jack sits down again. Annals. You know what? You know what I want to do. I want to chain you to the wall and let you watch me fuck your wife—and your kids. That's how much I fucking hate you—sorry. I don't really want to fuck kids. I don't even want to fuck y rotten wife—no she'd be an big a prick as you—but I fucking hate you, you dog, and I have to say something and I haven't got any way to fucking say it, prick, dog. Fuckin' screw where the hell are I? I know where I am. I'm in the fuckin' psychiatric section of rotten Long Bay. Off course I am. That's where I am. Off fucked. Please.

I don't really want all this—doing why I say it, you kids—because I'm stuck on the fuckin' moon and you don't even know—don't wanna know, anyway—and that makes me so bloody helpless that any sense can do what he likes to me. I'm fucked, so that's why I'm telling you to get fucked. I know you're there—why can't you leave I'm here?

We sit down a bit again. Look at this—treatment. What kind of treatment? What are I, a pig or something? What did I do? Stole a motor car, didn't I? Yeah—well how much do you pay for a fuckin' car? (laughs)—Not as much as I've paid for the rotten thing—just have a Captain Cook, at what I am—a shabazoo!

We suddenly become engaged and start attacking the cell. Throwing things about and be becoming exhausted. Then turning again to the window, in a quarter tone. What did I do? You damn—but I'll tell y what—when they put me in they took everything off me, my clothes, my money, my watch, everything everything but what they couldn't take—emotions, feelings, and my balls—my BALLS? You can't you check your balls in at the gate? (Please)—you're stuck with your balls—'s after a while you start to hate, 's you don't really want to have any fuckin' body but y can't help it—so you try to find some fuckin' way to love

some fuckin' thing and there's no way and so you go right off y head and think up being "mad"—but fuckin' treated all right—like a dog. The doctor shows jills down y throat and the pig shows his balls up your nose—truce (please).

And he's in the room, someone here today—hating me and so again starts to fantasize about things like fuck things about that—like what I need, chaining you to a wall and fucking your wife in front of you and all at a while you're sorry and not fit to be let out of the place—you're dangerous—so that's when they'll let you out after you're destroyed and not have to do anything but come back again—'s a fuckin' pain. On me, Pricks. You're an emerald—I know that! Well that's what you are—I say so. Not that you'll hurt. You don't even hate me so how could you care? You don't even know I'm here. Maybe if you did you would care, I damn, but I'd let myself in (please). Y'know what? I'm all on me own—the only one can help me is me. And I've got a chance either I can be the pills and the tubes induce me to nothing—in a fuck all fuckin' matter without a brain or—'or I can mean—'or I can't—I can mean and will be Jack! Not Number Ninety fuckin' then—yeah—in that's what I'll just have to do, because whether they know it or not I

JACK



am Jack and not any fuckin' number at all—yeah—what's that song? We shall overcome—yeah—well so I'll I'll overcome all on the own, without your help that's not coming anyway. (Please). Yeah—I'll have the little talk that Doctor Hypocrite wants—I'll inform her that I'm not gonna do any bloody thing by days—I'll get destroyed property—but at least they'll be destroyed a man out of a mother and not a number they manufactured for themselves—yeah Jack not to human? thoughtfully—pains slowly about the cell—nothing thinking it over, turn to window—Yeah—that's what I said.

We sit down abruptly, and stare at the floor. The door opens and The Warden enters. Jack stands up defiantly. The Warden suggests his button and under really there are could a screw (prick).

Warden: Well, well, well fuckin' Well what? Warden: Guess where I've been, Stray—um (Jack, is silent) I have been about my duties which usual but only watching rats but also putting outside their windows in order to overhear what're there is to hear (Mr suggests his button once more) and I didn't like what I heard outside your

cell a bit—but it's not used to increase on the grounds that you obviously take a wrong view of your situation—and of my own role in your treatment—(He pauses in a melodramatic pause) Why not try another cure? Try to think of me as a father—a father is whom you ought to show a proper respect—and so on come the raw prison as you've been doing it's a very risky thing to come the raw prison.

THE WARDEN SEES YOU IN BED (Sings) Oh—don't come the raw prison with father. Oh he'll come the raw prison with you. If you make daddy mad, He'll make daddy sad. He might even kick him in the face.

We always remember to please him. And don't make your daddy feel glad. Cause if you come the raw prison with Father.

Then he'll come the raw prison with you. Little raw-bastard-thing. He starts smiling with the latest Jack starts screaming at the bloody head imperative involved in adult's care. The Warden starts down surprised at Jack's lack of response. Warden: Well come on, screw, get a gear, scream if you can't. Jack: I'm all through screw—I get fucked. Please.

Warden: You'll do what you're told Jack. I'll do what I want.

Warden: Rat. Jack: Animal—SCREW!

Warden: Do you know what happens to rats who abuse officers?

Jack: I don't know as sure as give me fuck what else you do to—get fucked and leave me alone—'s tomorrow leave me alone? I'm here! Well that, enough? (The Screw makes a slow advance) And if you speak me with that thing again I'll take a off you and there it right up your ass. The Screw pauses.

Warden: Oh—'s you well? Haven't I just been telling you that rats who threaten an officer go somewhere? "GRAPTON" That's where our kids usually go!

Jack: So?

Warden: So they become very tractable rats, very tractable indeed. We see to that as Grapdon always, without exception, and that means you too if there's one more bit of lip from you—understand?

Jack: Well if I say one more thing?

Warden: Shut it.

Jack: Go and get y self well fucked—screw.

Warden: All right. That's the money. (He enters—walking slowly from the cell—pausing at the door.) The doctor wants to see you—after that we'll see (laughs) we'll see.

We hear the cell. The door opens. Jack is alone—starts to pace slowly up and down. Jack: Fuck on—fuck on—FUCK 'EM!!

*We sit down and begin to cry, unconvincingly. The door opens and The Doctor comes in.*

**Doctor:** Here now! What have we got here? Why all the tears? There, now? We have to be a team, come-come-*come!* *Start doing something, become big again!*

**Jack:** I'm a mother! Tigger!

**Doctor:** Oh, well, yes I know that. But, even mothers don't cry at your age! Besides, here I am to see you and have a chat, so it's not that if you're crying, am I? Have you taken your pills today?

**Jack:** No, no I haven't, and I'm not going to take 'em today, or any day. You want me mad but I'm not mad—I'm not!

**Doctor:** Oh, now now now—we must take our medicine, didn't the officer give them to you?

**Jack:** Yeah, and I stuck me finger down and spread 'em up again, and I'll keep on doing it and you can't stop me—I'm not mad, not going to be treated as if I am—*you* that?

**Doctor:** Of course. But, of course I have to decide that, that's my job, to make a report upon whether you're fit to be returned, so let's talk, and my report can decide the matter, *hmm?*

**Pause.**

**Jack:** All right, so let's talk then.

**Doctor:** Good! Now that's sensible. Rational. We're doing splendidly (looking at notebook and pen). Now, then, your name is Jack, *hmm?* And how old are you, Jack?

**Jack:** Thirty-four, today. They've already given me my birthday present.

**Doctor:** Your present?

**Jack:** Yeah, this (he displays his bracelet). What are you gonna do about it?

**Doctor:** Well I'm a psychiatrist, you'll do best to put down for me what you feel.

**Jack:** Yeah. I thought so, Tigger.

**Doctor:** Now, what were you born? Brothers and sisters?

**Jack:** Brothers. Two brothers.

**Doctor:** Uh-huh. And are you the eldest, or the youngest, *please* about?

**Jack:** Youngest. No, they're dead.

**Doctor:** Oh I'm sorry. Where did you go to school?

**Jack:** We moved to Sydney when I was nine. I went to a Catholic school at St Mary's, a lot of girls went to Catholic schools. Then all of a sudden my mum and dad were dead and I finished up in a home, *hmm?* Mistaking, Garwick.

Garwick, through the years to Long Bay Gaolhouse, Parramatta, the whole bloody process up to you. It's been gross. And you wouldn't understand a thing about it, so what's the use of talking? Tell me that.

**Doctor:** I'm not here to tell you anything. I'm here to ask you things. Now, then, it seems you have a long record as a criminal, what was your crime this time?

**Jack:** Car stealing. I got five years and I've done two-and-a-half of 'em.

**Doctor:** And how do you feel about your crime? Are you proud of it? Sorry? Do you feel guilty, or not?

**Jack:** I'm sorry... that I got caught. Doctor, I see. And what about any wife or children... any?

**Jack:** A wife. She's got black hair. She doesn't smoke. Usually fat, I think.

**Doctor:** Oh that's really too bad.

**Jack:** Yeah. Too bad.

**Doctor:** And how do you feel about the new? Do you love her still? Hate her... or don't you feel like talking about that?

**Jack:** I don't know what to tell.

**Doctor:** Really?

**Jack:** Really.

**Doctor:** I see... oh, well it doesn't matter.

**Jack:** Doesn't it?

**Doctor:** Well, I only meant... well, then, what actually happened to you at Parramatta? I have a hunch that you had some kind of difference with another chap, why? Did you strike? Did you do something wrong to him? Did he do something wrong to you? What was it?

**Jack:** I had something. He killed it. Then he screamed for the screws and I ended up here. I was upset for a while but it's alright now—**LEFT MR. GAG. Please.**

**Doctor:** Yes, yes, but all in good time. First telling me what was the "something," he killed?

**Pause.**

**Jack:** I don't know, not now.

**Doctor:** Well try to remember.

JACK



**Jack:** I don't want to remember! And I won't remember. Ask me something else.

**Doctor:** Well, let me try to remind you. I have a hunch that your "something" was simply a phlegm bag, of water, *hmm?*

**Jack:** It wasn't a bag, you know.

**Doctor:** No, but I want to know. That's why I'm here, to know what you thought you had. Do you still think of it? Do you want it back?

**Jack:** Well, the Doctor can bring him thinking, bring another hell.

**Doctor:** Look, Jack-boy, that doesn't please me any more than it does you... but I've got a job to do here, and so have you. We've both got to hang all this unpleasantness to a happy conclusion.

**Jack:** I've got a wife too, at home, and I have children. I'm human too, understand?

**Jack:** Oh go fucked well ya? Do you think I've been all the fucked places I've been, and seen what I've seen and known what I've known just so some prick like you can treat me like a fuckin' schoolboy? Listen! There's nothing wrong with me! Okay, so I went a bit funny for a while, but that's over now, a didn't work for me. It's over, I won't do it again, just send me back and

I'll be all right and you can find your little bag of fuck all to marry some other poor bastard, leave me alone. **PLEASE!**

**Pause.**

**Doctor:** You may be right. Well, now I'll think about our talk and then we'll see. *She closes her notebook, standing up.* Yes, it does seem that you're seriously

upset, but that's understandable in the circumstances. Tell me if I were to recommend your return to Parramatta. What would your attitude toward the other fellow be?

**Jack:** He's my friend. It was my fault. All I want to do is apologise to him. It's my case, I'm all right now. Please send me back.

The Doctor stands abruptly, shaking his notebook.

**Doctor:** I bid you to be quite absolutely sane and most decidedly sane before you walk to the door passing before going out. We'll see.

*He goes out the door.* It doesn't shut. *He slams it shut.* *He stands, paces up and down, hands rubbing his face.* *Facing to the window.*

**Jack:** *(Whisper & hysterical)* Oh what's a fuckin' doctor?

*Jack walks slowly up and down, a picture of misery. The door rattles open and the warden comes in slowly.*

**Warden:** So you managed it.

**Jack:** What?

**Warden:** That stupid speech you informed me you'd all night. You're to go back where you came from—out of here. **Jack:** Well then Christ for that, *couldn't!*

**Warden:** Don't laugh yet, there's a little matter of you talking me an animal. I didn't like that. I said don't like that. You understand that? You're just put yourself in **GRAFTON**.

**Jack:** You can still get fucked—*scow.*

**Warden:** Oh, yes, but you'll change your case once you get there. You know what's going to happen when you get there. *Hmm?*

**Jack:** Life I suppose. They'll give me a bag of fucking polythene and a bus—go and get fucked you screw day. The whole y'life, it fuck off and leave me alone—even for tonight. Leave me alone (he paces). Listen, you out—of course I don't know what's gonna happen there or anywhere else, neither do you.

**Warden:** Oh, but I do. I used to be there, and I got stranded down here (he slams it). Let me tell you no, you'll go there in handcuffs and a chain... and when you get to the gate you'll be asked what your name is and when you answer you'll get a smack in the mouth... and the Chief'll ask you again, and you'll answer again and you'll get another smack in the mouth... then he'll ask you again and you'll be a stupid enough prick to answer again and there'll be another smack in the mouth... then y'know that's before y've even got to the cell-block—so then you'll be taken into the Wing and y'know what's there? The Reception Committee, perhaps you've heard of them as the fags,

hall room. (laughter) ... and they hang you off and kick the cane out of your hands ... and then every day you'll get it, they'll give you assault on officers ... you better not let the papers and order preparing to fight! And that's tomorrow! You've been delayed by that idea and you're REALLY in go ... so just get ready to go! I'll lead you!

**Jack:** I'm ready to go  
lights down

**Fights up**

**The Doctor and The Warden stand across arms and begin to sing**

**CH:** The System's working well,

The System's working well

We've got lots of prisoners

to lock up in our cells

And if they don't like it

we send them to this hell!

**Doctor:** I've got these (Filly)

**Warden:** And I've got this (Barney)

**AND THE SYSTEM'S WORKING WELL**

(They do a little dance)

**Doctor:** Well I've done my best and worked so hard

to improve this jail,

I received ten kindly questions

but be well not answer back

**Warden:** And so have I! I've done my job, my arm is getting sore

I've flogged the bastard stupid

but he always asks for more

**Doctor:** If he remains recalcitrant

and keeps up his mistake,

we'll leave him in pyjamas

we'll keep him in his cell

**Warden:** We'll persecute the wretched scound,

and if he will not tell

**Well I'll send him off to GRATTON**

**And The System will work well!**

(They almost come more together)

lights down

**Fights up**

**A loud cry and Jack is thrown forcibly through the door (doctor) wearing the usual prison gown**

**Warden's Voice:** Get in there you fuckin' weak dog!

**The door slams and it locked Jack, his mouth open on the floor for seconds**

**He picks himself up and decently regards the surroundings. He stands. Begins to walk ghost slowly**

**Jack (his face now against Gratton)** they nearly killed me they have killed me ... weak dogs ... too of 'em ...

**he looks in a barrel of his pants** I think I'm a barrel of his pants ... dogs

ah well, the end of the line ... no way out in this fuckin' one ... too bad ...

**I had a gun ... I'd just love to blow the bastards to smithereens (laughter in the shadows)** ... but I haven't got a gun,

hence I even got a hope left in the world ... much less any answer to the bastards —

and nobody gives a fuck

**My faith (slow and quiet slow) about the end** ... **Reverie**

**The Angel at the door (grace) ... too late (quietly) (triumphantly) ... It is only the man whose reason is clouded by his sexual impulse who would undertake the fashionable cure for life of one of these knucklehead nature-determined — fuck ...**

**He paces in silence for a few seconds and resumes**

**The music now comes in quietly (Barney and a Boyer) He sits down on the top of wood**

**Ah well, that's gone ... what's it matter! They're probably doing a man's finger**

**probably** ... **From old Tim, he's wiser! I suppose** ... **probably** ... **doesn't know** ... **what's happened to a man** ... **never mind, there's nobody going to see me** ... **I except these bastards** ... **I'll be done** ... **ten out of these ten** ... **in prison**

**His pants agree**

**Where the one blows along the river's bank with whatever the rubs vintage drink** ... **and when the Angel with his** ... **darling draught drives up to their** ... **table** ... **that and do not drink**

**He shakes his head passing**

**Yeah, that's praise ... but it ain't easy**

**We're not passing**

**You said, it is easy ... no, not easy but it's easier than the other thing, easier than the lot of the same you drink, the lip you**



**press, and in the nothing all things and is** ... **your** ... **remember** ... **Man** ... **though** ... **an** ... **but when** ... **that shall be** ... **— nothing** ... **there shall not be less** ... **graves** ... **but it's that** ... **I could be lost** ... **that nothing** ... **I could've been a screw** ... **— ha-ha-ha** ... **Shit** ... **Why the fuckin' hell did I ever bother to read?**

**Jack grows like the cell** ... **putting his nose and** ... **conscience** ... **the proceeds with interest** ... **saying** ... **his hand on the jacket** ... **He sits down** ... **and addresses the warden**

**Jack:** Filly, listen, I know ... you don't give me a bloody fuckin', tho', ... **what's a man** ... **I do!** ... **the filly, I'm in** ... **(quietly)** ... **memorandum** ... **Derry Dick is Filly** ... **Richard** ... **are** ... **the old song, ah?**

**Remember** ... **that was, about the beam who** ... **and there on the top until he won the lottery?**

**He nods** ... **— says**

**Oh, I used to live on Dudley Plains,**

**until I was hit by a car in Tail's** ... **but Derry Dick is Filly, Richard** ... **now** ... **(He paces) (laughter to himself) Ah yeah** ... **the old Derry Dick** ... **was it hell a** ... **from me** ... **(pays again)** ... **My present was interest** ... **my alibi was in tags** ... **my old man** ... **that was bastard** ... **I was all-in patched for Yag** ... **I knuckled around the worst of them,**

**my only means were tramps and loans,** ... **but Derry Dick is Filly, Richard** ... **now** ... **(He chuckles and sits down across) Ah, the old song** ... **can't beat 'em** ... **well old Dick had a left me a quid, though they'll** ... **that's what I thought it is** ... **— make it well!** ... **(He grows in the thought) Yeah** ... **haven't** ... **got a pencil, but** ... **ah, well, it's the** ... **thought that counts, so they say** ... **Well, let's see** ... **for a start, I can leave this to Ben** ... **(he picks up the chair)** ... **after I drop** ... **me in it** ... **(laughter)** ... **he could wear it** ... **instead of his cap, but I'm better, much** ... **more appropriate, in fact** ... **for a card like** ... **him** ... **Filly** ... **often says he's a thing** ... **suggest** ... **ah, that, the man thing I have** ... **all the bastards in my bloody absence** ... **then they'll have nothing** ... **I play with except** ... **they're either poor bastards** ... **yeah** ... **in** ... **what about me mate, what about old Tim,** ... **who's a warden** ... **what's happened** ... **I see, I** ... **suppose** ... **(growing voice) Tim?** ... **to you** ... **I frequently my conscience** ... **— one month he'll** ... **on the board** ... **— it's yours** ... **— tell the Screw I** ... **said so** ... **— and also tell me I said to get** ... **lucked** ... **thanks you**

**(He stands up and paces again)**

**What the** ... **Yeah** ... **I'm better on** ... **more ways** ... **one** ... **unconsciously** ... **again!** ... **that is** ... **what the right word?**

**Fucked if I know** ... **I'll just have a bit,** ... **anyway** ... **who gives a fuck? I don't** ... **Yes,** ... **I do** ... **but not about words** ... **Fuckin' blightin'** ... **Thirteen** ... **I've learnt you all the** ... **things we used to have** ... **in all the things that** ... **we might've had** ... **but we ain't gonna** ... **not** ... **now** ... **not ever** ... **and wouldn't that spoil** ... **ya?** ... **Remember** ... **that, bastards** ... **thing in** ... **the corner, with the man on the roof and** ... **it's snuggled-up, thinkin' how happy we** ... **was!** ... **Yeah** ... **well we never saw this lot** ... **again, did we?** ... **No fear, fucked if we did**

**but here it is and it's not gonna go** ... **away (breaks into song)** ... **Our love is** ... **here to stay!** ... **(laughter in the)** ... **never** ... **mind** ... **get yourself some trim hair** ... **who'll** ... **look after ya** ... **it's too high up to me** ... **grass, don't** ... **we don't go wavin'** ... **my** ... **black dog** ... **fine** ... **just let your grow** ... **long** ... **— Jesus Christ**

**(He sits and hums his first line)**

**(He sits) I love Me we fuckin' love!**

**He goes and takes a short** ... **leaving it** ... **into strips** ... **he makes the strips into a** ... **kind of rope** ... **He stands on the table and** ... **anchors it to the window bars** ... **He ties** ... **the other end about the neck** ... **He lifts his feet** ... **removing the shoe last (strains his knees)** ... **and over the hands together then he** ... **strips through his feet** ... **and he** ... **then his hands** ... **flashes behind his back** ... **and he** ... **removes one last time** ... **beginning to get** ... **emotional**

**This one I know, and when it were of each** ... **could leave the same** ... **that every prison** ... **that man build is built with backs of thieves** ... **and** ... **barred with bars** ... **but Christ** ... **should see** ... **how men** ... **their brothers** ... **mate** ... **he** ... **wants** ... **ready to snap off the table and** ... **the**

**Jack, too long, blightin'**

**He stands** ... **he wants to cry, as the lights** ... **grow dim**

**F.F.F.**



# International

## Alan Seymour in London

### Voice from the Dead

With heaviest heart and deep abseption I report from "half, dead London" (Mike Morris, *Theatre Australia*, July 17) to confirm all your worst suspicions about the Old Dart. How dreadful it is to live in the cultural desert!

Why, on considering the week's Theatre Guide I find only 84 plays on in London this week. Only 84 plays from which to choose, how can it possibly survive in this "enriched" place? — Well, on any given night, only 84 chances to make, including opera, ballet, orchestral and chamber concerts, rock concerts, pop concerts, modern dance and more?

I leave out reviews altogether, to add them to the list would only cut fast up, especially as now there are not only ungracious West End and suburban theatres showing the latest films but four or five places devoted to vintage novels or excerpts of new uncommercial (political/experimental) work.

Of the 84 plays on offer some thirty are Fringe or Alternative theatre and the remainder are West End or sub-subsidised companies such as the RSC, the National or the Royal Court. How made quite they are, as Mike Morris has so accurately perceived.

The RSC works its two theatres in Stratford and two in London (the Aldwych and the Warehouse) in clearly very unambitious with a mere 24 plays on offer at the moment. From Shakespeare to new political plays by Howard Barker and C. P. Taylor and Edward Bond.

These critics and audiences who come purely from all over the world are obviously fooled by the Company's publicity and prongs. Unlike the no-nonsense Mr Morris they write in naive excitement of the immense range of writing, direction and acting talent on offer from perhaps "the most accomplished and daring theatrical company in the world."

And the National is what Mr Morris, with some originality, calls its "Yan" building. Many youths have been directed at that great edifice but nobody believes had thought of dubbing it, with a reasonably truly Australian economy of language, "Yan". World-weary Mr Morris can only sigh "Boring" about what goes on inside the building's three auditoria.

Well, yes. After all, what can you say about a play (*Polser*) which offers nothing better than Gielgud, Schofield and Paul Rogers in its cast? Or the woefully unambitious response which can't offer anything better than a rather gaudy fancy Appleby in mainstream mood (the staged public will up faithfully night after

night to pack the theatre, unaware that the real sophistication of the world we bored a name at a Grosvenor Barker visual drama *The Manxman House* hardly new for half a century and called, by the notoriously underestimating London critics, wonderfully impressive, immediately produced and deeply moving, a revival of Noel's *Figgs Days* with Peggy Ashcroft. But's highly charged study of the struggle for supremacy between Lena Trinty and Sanka in *State of Revolution*, and the burning contemporary *Sir in Whining*, a dreamed documentary by young writer Shane Cunningham on the public controversy over teaching methods in a North London school which in the last year has helped to focus the issues in the ongoing debate on modern education.

How typically megalomaniac of the once ecclesiastic magazine *Time Out* to give "thanks, support and attention" for the NT authorities who despite pressure from certain parties put the piece on.

"The Royal Court" Mr Morris was kind to it although only since his departure from the land has that theatre pulled itself out of what was generally thought to be an insidiously poor end of tier.

The West End? Its members academically intolerant for their taste in simplicity. The RSC's commercial seasons of *Walden* and *Alan and Superman* must appear terribly, is that why these two shows play to capacity audiences almost every night? Stays! The West End used to be about stars. That explains why you can choose from Ralph Richardson, Celia Johnson, Eileen Williams and Alex Guinness, but if they want their faithful following to turn up why are they all doing new plays and not revivals of their old successes?

Oh, sorry, the public is turning up. Well, in one of the new plays is decidedly in the old style (Douglas Haure's *The Comp-Jitter*) it must be to savour the less substantial glow of a style of acting now passing and unlikely to be reborn. Guinness, however, like Gielgud in recent years, persists in playing finer material of a more subtle kind.

Well, the English are in self-created mood and as playwrights such as Alan Bennett can last the distance with Indian choly humour the public presumably goes to have its current mood not only reflected but articulated.

It is wrong, of course, that the English can't seem to produce theatre with the verve and drive of the best American

writing. Or, as theatre always and accurately, if sometimes unconsciously, projects the style as well as the preoccupations of its own society, is that to not for the impossible? Not quite.

Then "half, dead" London also produces, in its alternative theatre, the aggressive, militant, dynamic manner of the younger practitioners who at present seem to be working out some answers to the question I too asked in an earlier *Theatre Australia* as to whether the Fringe was bringing up (you should pardon the expression) an much original and lively material as it did in the first great surge of a few years ago?

At the Bush Playhouse (Londoned middle-Southern Province and Political Fantasy with genuine panache, Simon Wilson in his new play with music taken on the Kray twins, *East End* gangsters, an uneven production which, however, has some thought-provoking and witty passages there is a contemporary *Amadeus* drama, *My Students* in a grand sweeping survey of the Argentinian tyrants *Mary Goshaw* (bravely) a three-month season of new American drama and the usual linkages of Brecht, Weill, Peter Weiss, a new *Barrabaz* (last year's discovery, the year's most exposed new playwright and a right catchmaster in his tough, sociological studies of today's disaffiliated working-class youth).

A substantive *Beau Peche* extra suggests a New which takes apart bourgeois man's desperately inadequate response to the world's all-too-regular disaster bulletin, *Apocalypse* and *It's all Right*, two new plays by a writer who made his mark with a West End success and now writes the more personal poems he has always wanted to, a non-intellectual experimental *Afternoon* by Gabriel Rosenwald whose Russian European conditioning takes him right outside English perceptions, and, of course, Tom Stoppard's *Madness*. *Dirty Jones* which began as an Alternative offering but, now qualified, one supposes, as the "West End".

Yes, it's all very odd and dead, with new companies, new actors, new directions, new playwrights crapping up reluctantly week by week to henn to as they did Mike Morris. How sensible of him to rush to New York where he found all of two new playwrights copying the Hudson on line, lucky man. And how even more wise of him to return to that great centre of theatrical vitality, Perth, Western Australia, except, of course, that it has managed to produce some talent in the past.

## Anne Fraser outlines some of the problems facing Australia's theatre designers

In 1955 I was appointed as the first Resident Designer for the Union Theatre Repertory Company, now the Melbourne Theatre Company, and to begin, with my appointment to Australia's first professional repertory company, the only consistent support the Australian designer had had.

Previously the only work available was with the major amateur companies and this was more for love than money. Although their worth as a training ground was invaluable and their standard of work, on the whole, equal to much seen today.

The commercial theatres, which could best afford designers, preferred, or at least once were forced, to use original overseas designs for their major productions and only the Bazooka Theatre used local talent.

This situation successfully ruled out only two of our most talented designers, both to much world standard, the late London School and Kenneth Rowell, but its doubt talents that would have developed to similar standard had they not been deflected by lack of opportunity.

It is now twenty-five or so years later that we are facing the loss of a whole generation of senior designers in much the same way that we lack an older generation of actors, exited for the same reason.

With the establishment of the Elizabethan Theatre Trust hope and opportunity were renewed. The Trust Players were formed and so was the Trust Opera,

both using Australian designers when necessary. Soon followed the Australia Ballet. They too used Australian designers. However, these on the whole were expatriates including the "lapsed" Kenneth Rowell, or were well known parents of expatriates — Australians never the less.

With the development of more state drama companies and state opera and ballet companies, certainly more work became available and those designers who had decided to stay working in Australia, and help develop a growing theatre, began to see a hope of full-time employment and a chance to realise one's ambitions at home rather than abroad.

The National Institute of Dramatic Art established a design school to cope with the future needs of the industry and produces an average of four hopeful graduates each year. I have used the word *hope* extensively perhaps, but in fact that is what the Australian designer has in Western hope there would not be a theatre industry here at all!

There would be no more than eight permanent positions for designers at the whole of Australia, considerably less for design assistants. As an example, the Old Tote Theatre Company mounted fifteen productions for 1971. Five were designed by resident designers, two by freelance designers, two of whom are from overseas. The ratio varies from company to company but it can be seen that the majority of productions in the major drama companies are designed by freelance

designers.

The theatre is not a well paid profession and designers are no exception. A senior resident designer's salary would probably equal the average wage. The freelance designer would find this difficult to attain and in some cases would find it almost impossible to equal the basic wage.

While one considers that \$1,500 for a production is considered generous and that anything from \$300 to \$1,000 quite usual, at the former for a designer would need to exceed six productions a year and at the latter, in excess of one to equal the average wage. In addition, the freelance designer has no access to sickness pay, holiday pay or superannuation and must pay for all materials used in model making etc. It might also be added that the lower fees paid by smaller companies are often expected to include providing the set or making props.

Although in the major companies, actual manual work is not expected, the detail involved in conception, preparation and production is time consuming and because of tight schedules in workshops, highly detailed models, working drawings, property designs and details and costume designs are expected. This involves weeks of work. The model itself can take anything from one to three weeks to make, after all research documents and discussions are over and sometimes a rethink is necessary if a director is not happy with the result.

When capturing time seems slow to five

Left: Peter Jackson. Right: Robert Walker.  
Photo: Robert Walker



works and a designer must be on call at all times to make spot decisions and attend to the many details. He may also have to spend prices or labour and anything up to twelve weeks, just be necessary to design, present and answer a production. Twelve weeks for a production equals four productions a year and to equal the average wage, a fee of \$2,500 would be necessary. This is rarely the case so a designer must find other means to supplement his income and often takes on more than one project at a time if available and obviously lowers his own standard by doing so.

This is unsatisfactory both from the designers' point of view and that of the management. Yet to reach the standard that we should now be experiencing, it is imperative that designers are given time and money to research, experiment and develop their ideas. It is commonly expressed that experts should be brought here to show us the way to new techniques and in some cases, the old ones also. Yet when a designer wishes to use his originality and inventiveness in this way, as experienced with new materials (we do know they exist, we can read) this is rejected through lack of time and money.

The financial problem faced by drama companies is tremendous. The profits are not a Pandora's Box as thought by some and they rely heavily on their box office income. Wages are not likely to remain static, neither are basic, highly priced materials. Obviously design will be the area to suffer.

This is happening all over the world but it seems odd, that unlike Britain for instance, which has long since reached a high level of technical excellence and can afford to attract a huge fee, on the other hand, may never have the opportunity to develop our skills to this point. We do not have the equivalent of Britain's National Theatre as a showcase and because of the cost problem, however good our stage man-

agement are, they can never reach this level.

The nearest equivalent grant-wise are the ballet and opera companies, but on the whole these are unsuitable to our own designs. In a three year period ending in 1978, seventeen new productions will have been submitted by the Australian Opera Company, seven of which will have been designed by Australian designers, ten by overseas designers, seven by fee — not too bad perhaps, on the surface, but in fact the latter ten productions represent fifteen designers as in some cases both a costume and a set designer are brought to the country.

It has been explained that the lack of Australian Opera designers has created this problem and of course one can only agree. It has also been explained that because overseas directors are brought here, they must be allowed to work with a designer of their choice and of course theoretically, one must agree with that also — up to a point. There are some who would have certain designers and directors altogether. This is nonsense. We can learn a great deal from them — if they are good. Often they are not.

The Old Tote is bringing both director and designer from Kamato for Gorky's *The Lower Depths*. I personally am very excited about this. Rarely do we have an opportunity to witness productions from this part of the world.

In 1975 Ted Pappas Call was brought from the United States to direct *Misawing Broome's Electric*. He brought an designer with him because of his limited gey but asked to use an Australian designer for costumes. Previously William Gaskill from the U.K. was brought here to direct *Love's Labour Lost* and asked especially for an Australian designer and earlier this year, I worked with Hugh Hunt on *The Plough and the Stars* which was planned in

London when I visited there last year. It can be done.

What is the answer then? Do we allow our designers to make themselves once again through frustration and lack of opportunity? A fee has been written recently about protecting our management from lower priced overseas imports and tariffs applied to protect Australian employment. Should not designers have the same protection?

The Designer's Association in the performing arts has recently been re-formed after having slipped into oblivion in the past few years, because designers are considered for the future of our profession. Out of our first considerations will be to aim for this protection.

Perhaps then too more could be done to stimulate designers' work and development, not to reach through overseas travel grants, although that are a continuing necessity, but perhaps in the same manner that writers and artists are helped — to produce a work. Could not a designer and a theatre be given a separate grant to develop an area, possibly nominated by the designer, that otherwise could not be afforded? The use of proposition comes to mind as an area that is rarely used in drama companies because a lot of time is needed to plan and experiment long before the production is brought into the theatre. Three to six months planning could be necessary in such a case with close co-operation between photographer, designer and lighting designer.

If it can be used by any section of the Australian Theatre that the Australian designer is not good enough or experienced enough, then we must do all in our power to make sure that this criticism can never be repeated.

I believe, that with some thought and liaison between management, designers and directors too, we can develop the talent we already have to a point where overseas designers are both unnecessary and undesirable.





## Focus off the National

The focal point of Australian operatic interest, almost — if not quite — switched away from the national company during September and October, as this year's major season at the Sydney Opera House traded off into Gilbert and Sullivan and a brilliant visiting opera director from Britain was responsible for some outstanding events of musical theatre both in Brisbane and Sydney.

Anthony Beech did a thoroughly stimulating double bill at the Sydney Larsonsatorium as well as a notable Mozart production for the Queensland Opera Company that was part of the most ambitious opera season staged by any of Australia's regional companies this year — a season which started up *The Marriage of Figaro* with Verdi's *Il Trovatore* for a combined total of 11 performances in just over a fortnight.

Yet nothing ought to be allowed to rob the last new production of the Australian Opera's winter season at the Sydney Opera House, Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman* of the strains of due to it. Of all the productions mounted in the 1977 major

season at the Sydney Opera House, new or old, this *Dutchman* was chosen to do two top jobs on opening night — as much a principal triumph for that remarkably capable and versatile conductor, Carlo Felice Cillario, as an assemblable triumph for the company.

The two players of principals were very evenly matched indeed. Some might even claim the "succubi" as a whole was better than the "Stras" — though perhaps that is an overstatement.

In the title role Robert Altman was marvellously impressive dramatically and sang near his best, but occasionally he had trouble coping with the higher reaches of the part, and cutting through the immense flood of orchestration Raymond Myers found the role more comfortable as to range, though his voice is tolerably low even for Wagner, but could not convey quite as effectively the powerful, vaguely other-worldly dramatic presence the *Dutchman* requires.

As Senta, both Nancy Grant and Lore Koppel-Winter turned in the vocal performance of their respective careers. Grant

produces the more awe-poweringly beautiful Wagnerian sound, as she had already demonstrated at Hamburg in the 1974 AG production of *Tannhäuser*, but she also acted Senta with great conviction, apart from one highly awkward physical rough-and-tumble encounter with her lover (Robin Donald) which was probably the responsibility of bad direction.

Koppel-Winter, who appeared in the part of this Sydney production in Copenhagen a few years ago, seemed more dramatically at home in the part, conveying superbly the eerie obsession Senta has with the *Dutchman* through his legend and portrait even before he appears on the deck at all.

The lung moments, during the depths of the second act, when she and Altman stood poised to the spot, half a stage apart, as Daland loomed and gabbled irrationally around them, was an outstanding piece of acting that thoroughly gripped the audience. And vocally she copied extremely well, her characteristically wide intervals making far less in this sort of music than



Figures in the drama  
Robert Altman and Nancy Grant

in just about anything else she has going with the AG. It was particularly cruel and solar in view of that, that a few boys missed her curtain call on opening night.

The two girls complimented each other, Ronald Dorel turning in the more mature vocal performance but being too mature of appearance to be quite credible as Senta's earthshaking lover while Robin Donald acted the role to great effect though his sentiments seemed sincere of himself vocally.

The most truly authoritative Wagnerian performance of the lot, though, was Donald Shanks' Daland — full-throated and towering, both vocally and physically apart from Grant, he was the only one of the principals to make good to achieve and maintain consistently true Wagnerian vocal stature. Harpburg, though, he was a little too dramatically assertive. Neil Warren-Smith captured the dramatic aspect of the role perfectly, though he sometimes lacked a measure of the enormous vocal power required to bust a Wagnerian orchestra in full cry and thrill an audience in the process.

I am tempted to chaperone about the new Australian Opera production of *The Flying Dutchman* even in the full knowledge that it is a fairly direct descendant, via the Royal Danish Opera, of Richard Wagner's original 1879 production at Bayreuth which he re-created in Copenhagen two years later. For however old but such productions may be, however, they are radical to Australian audiences

and this one has a good deal more intense moment than a mere recreation of the old, traditional, pre-war way of doing things — one of some of its details given.

Bornie Froehner's designs are starkly effective, some of the stage effects horrendous. Particularly brilliant were the appearance of the Dutchman's ship out of nowhere in the first act, its dark blood-red against the winchless sea, the Dutchman himself all but swamped against its mast, and, in Act II, the stark rime-ice dimensional facade that evoked Daland's house and the two-woman spinning wheels arranged in twin phantasies, however inauthentic they may be.

Similarly, Peter Pearce's direction — often it was more like choreography — was almost always effective, from the sudden of Act I coming to stand on a stationary dock to give the impression of a storm-tossed ship, to their quaint little quadrille in Act III, though perhaps that was postponed with a little too long and certainly it was not always as precise as it should have been. And the appearance of the ghostly crew of the Dutchman's ship was handled superbly — at other worlds and strikingly effective in its visual impact as the unseen movements of the female singers were in evoking dances to warmth to illuminate the grand misère of Senta over the portrait of the Dutchman in Act II.

But the portrait itself was kept high over the production, up in a totally improbable position, one of the few mistakes

misadventures of the production, even worse was the handling of the denouement, with Senta disappearing guardedly down the back lift on which the Dutchman had popped up through the stage door in Act I, and the Dutchman himself collapsing in the middle of the stage instead of being unscathed, and Senta's redemption music being cut off too soon to end the opera on a happily premonitory and musically satisfying manner.

The Australian conductor George Fennell, who took over from Collins for the last eight performances of the *Dutchman*, walked the production even further once he had settled in, just as Veeh's Macbeth had improved under Collins when he took over from John Pritchard earlier in the season.

Indeed, Pritchard's great contribution to this season came toward the end of August, when he conducted three performances of *Kiss Jan* over which were so much better than the summer 1976 performances of this Copley production it was all but unbelievable. By and large the singers were the same, but Pritchard, a Mozart specialist got everything spot on that time round what it had been only more-or-less right before.

And the presence of the original director to re-rehearse these few performances was clearly a contributing factor. Its actual fast-and-garish aspects come across superbly in the original, but it was even funnier at spots this time round due to some additional innovation by Copley and a whole new dimension had been added in



*Dutchman* in Sydney  
 (left) Dorel, Warren-Smith, Grant, Shanks



## Australian Dance Theatre Dance Company (NSW)

When I first saw Christopher Bruce's *Weekend* in Adelaide it struck me as a clever interpretation of male/female role playing.

But, seeing it a third time in Melbourne, it goes deeper than that: almost the stereotypical of the seemingly impossible common ground of men and women.

It still looks like an abstraction of a dirty weekend with wife and husband swapping and all that, but these tired spring twirls that fall apart, these desperate sublimations of energy that pack mark the work's length, drag it into a deeper psychosocial realm, a realm of identity problems of placement in the world.

*Weekend* is a team, male-female work, it focuses back on the audience, it engages them because it opens their spontaneity, it opens an aching sort of collective heart of darkness.

The work's unsettling form illustrates the power that becomes apparent when a choreographer puts his heart and spirit into his creation, all the more striking when he does it in such a way as to take it out of the autobiographical and into the arena of common collective experience.

And yet, needless to say, only a fraction of that feeling would come across if the dancers were clung up in their performance, but the five dancers of the ADT led by the husband and wife team of John Blake and Joe Scoglio bring so much female vulnerability and keen intelligence to the work that it seems almost spontaneous, as if we were all regrettably watching a very private and intense personal situation.

It's the same sort of intimacy that they bring to the dance, *Small World*, choreographed by Scoglio.

The small team in question are three in the middle of the night when one or both partners wakes up or a left awake and one is thinking about the whole affair—*Midnighters*, doubts, the desire for independence yet longing for interdependence. The whole work filters through all the emotions inherent in a love affair blossoming or in the early stages of an collapse, and there are a lot of similarities.

In its structure, so close to that of the classical pas de deux (first, male and female solo and final duet), it reminds me a great deal of Glen Tetley's masterpiece fashioned along the same theme, *Heroine*. However, Scoglio's choice of music (a series of Scottish waltzes) didn't fool me. It seemed as if a huge pit had been drawn between the stage of the work and its background. The music was played and delivered, who is the choreography was lost, violent even abstracted, but perhaps that

was the intention behind the choice, a lyric clash on which a highly strong, female tapestry was woven.

One also sensed a sort of some sort to give the work more presence. Reason for Armstrong's use for *Heroine* was a huge white dish that somehow became the apotheosis of the double ball, it was surely tied to the image of the ballet, and gave it added impact.

But I could find no fault with Scoglio's choreography. He has his thrusts firmly delivered at the outset and every movement, especially those nerve outbursts and looks that spring strongly out of the floor, takes the audience deeper and deeper into an ironic, marital drama.

One might think, from the above works that the Melbourne season was all deep drama and heavy statement. A lot of it was, but at least it was said well and powerfully. Not once did the ideas of the works overreach themselves to become merely straining posturing notions of something that could have been.

But as a lover, there were Taylor's *Four in the Afternoon* and *To Goodly Space*. I had seen *Four* in the African years ago when it was in the Hamilton repertoire. It's simply a set of dances at a gathering in gym, in this case that somehow go over in a regularly average, black humourous way. Somebody in the gym accidentally rams one of those horrendous ABC ladies hair combs into them to walk, run, get heads on head etc, then it untidily erupts to mind-boggling themselves and feel things and the things that these grown-ups happen to feel would doubtless horrify the ABC.

It ends up with some of the dancers leaving the stage never to return and in one case, being accidentally battered to death, all very macabre and amusing.

I don't think Taylor purports to be "heavy" on this work, but it does say something about confidence, about people knowing themselves to be led and about the working comedy we live in.

Yet far and away the best thing by Taylor in the programme was *Stars and*. It was one of the greatest successes of Ballet Victoria and now Taylor has recast it on the Australian Dance Theatre.

The title could admit of two interpretations. One of the fading dramatic magnificence of a single person or "star" and the effect of that on a crowd of admirers, and with the dynamism of Pirella Beckmann's solo one could easily see it as that.

The other, the one that seems to me to be reasonable is the collapse of a world and time, of a star in the stellar sense.

By virtue of those frozen curves and groupings that splutter out onto the stage only to vanish and then again, it would seem that this is the image that impels the work forward, for who would not be fascinated and startled at the existence of our own solar system clattering and collapsing in on itself?

On another level it could be seen as a purely abstract dance piece of the utmost electrifying and compact intensity, but whatever way one sees it, it opens itself up to incorporate all manner of interpretations.

Taylor has already, within the space of two months fashioned a company of dedicated, diverse and consistently excellent performers, all of them of solid culture yet all working as a coherent whole.

Once now their corporate image is coming through. Their "style" is different from that of the Dance Company (NSW).

Unfortunately I won't be able to see them in the choreographic season at the Space in November, when they will premiere works by their own dancers/choreographers, but I am looking forward to seeing them at the next Festival of Arts, when they'll have their own season as well as appearing in Hippest's *Midsummer Marriage*. If all goes well and they do get to Sydney it will be a welcome chance for Sydney audiences to compare and contrast them with the Dance Company (NSW).

Graham Murphy, as a choreographer is going from strength to strength. His latest work, *Five Earth Air Water* seen in the last season for 1977 in the Opera House, is his best work to date.

So to the evocative John Tanczer music, (*Cartasas* [Spanish]) it is a series of solos for four women based upon the ancient "quintessence" of the four elements and, by extension the four temperaments.

The choreographic language is minimalist and finely observed and it definitely repays repeated attention.

It has the most fascinating lapidary quality, sending the minds eye into deeper and wider spaces. While watching it, I was conscious not only of the four elements and temperaments, but the four levels of the physical bodies according to the classical of *Weekend* and the four states of the soul on the path to illumination as described by St Bonaventura. It may seem far-fetched, but the more with its dual metaphors and modern sensibilities and the huge white choreography that dominates the stage, not to mention the superb lighting (which not only makes movement but a sublime color).

Every quality of the four dancers (Jen-

B

after Barry, Nene Werriemkava, Sherida Costa and Janet Varney) is used, stretched and exploited.

Outstanding to my mind was Janet Varney, always a dancer of elegance, grace and suppleness, but comparisons are odious and the work blends all its parts together so well that one really cannot draw and quarter it without dismantling the whole.

Giuseppe Wilson's new work was a distilling of Pagnum. In the past I've tended to be a little bit leery with Wilson, his constant dancing about dance and his aim of setting himself choreographic problems to either have it always paid off.

But with Pagnum, all the ideas have jelled for once. I first saw it at the Company's experimental studio theatre at Woolloomooloo and I initially didn't think it would work so well in the huge expanse of the Opera Theatre. Yet it came to life and expanded well in its new setting. It seemed to have room to breathe and even increased in interest.

The theme behind it all is choreographing with and against rhythm. A series of exploratory movements extend the ballets form out onto the stage against the independent backing of some John Cage prepared piano music then follows a solo to Lou Reed's Rock and Roll Harp, when most, dead pan and quite funny. After that is more of the ensemble, again moving against the Cage music and now totally independent of each other, a series of unrelated solos.

Towards the end there is a duet to Belle

Walker's 'Do ya Wanna Dance' that never approaches disco based stretch, followed by another solo that is trying to find an exact choreographic equal to the cage music. Finally over more the ensemble, now working in tiny compact forms yet each of them essentially unrelated and so on until the end.

It sounds rather cerebral but it works, it interests and it manages to communicate its ideas, which when compared with such dancing is no small feat in that vast black auditorium at the Opera Theatre.

One other work that I first saw in that experimental theatre and which also had its official premiere at the Opera House was Andrea Toppe's first ever choreographic offering. Forcible set to the Carlos Chacra score of the same name.

He has expanded it beyond his first concept, the central gas lighting gas duet dance for Sherida Costa and Ross Phillip and added a rather vibrant, melismatic male female warfare opening. This part should, I think be reconsidered. It does have in it with all its pelvic slinking and gyrating but it sticks itself too closely to the impulse of the music as if the choreographer were clucking at its own stumps for success sake. If a dance piece is to have any life at all, it must be its own.

But the duet is marvelously put together and soaks the viewer with its logic and basic swathing ferocity. Toppe doesn't stop to ruminate and ponder. He constructs his work accurately in a burst of effort and the sure footedness of his style shines through.

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## Frederick Ashton and His Ballets David Vaughan



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by David Vaughan

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# Journey Among Women Listen to the Lion



Henri Salfra's *Listen to the Lion* was made before his successful *Storm Boy*, and is in an entirely different vein. Where *Storm Boy* is open, optimistic, a dream of natural beauty, *Listen to the Lion* is set in a constructed urban hell — a gaunt rubbish tip, a tunnel, a hotel bar where the deadly intent is to get drunk as fast as possible. It is a diary of three days of a wife, as it happens the first three days. The doctor, known as Hunter, rises up one morning from the garbage dump like a sorrowful thing somebody has trodden and then set on its feet, and strides into the city, carrying a paper parcel of possessions. He meets some other drunks, one of them a woman with a wild cackling laugh, in a tunnel where they share a bottle. Disgracefully, a lion they never expected rushes through.

They scatter, plunging into the darkness. Hunter loses his nerve, wanders in dark lanes, is beaten up by *Clockwork Orange* thugs, is helped to a night shelter by another doctor. He is taken in reluctantly by the waitman, who can smell death. And of course he is right. Hunter creates war fantasy, and is close the film, but with no dramatic or as powerful theme of self destruction.

Hunter is superbly played by Wyn Roberts. Barry Loversi has a role as a conningly naïve Syd Haydon is the lion who befriends Hunter, and John Derran appears as an angriest, a very sure

figure.

*Listen to the Lion*, produced, researched and written by a young Sydney film maker, Bob Hill, won two awards at the Sydney Film Festival — the Rooster International and the Greater Union Award — Fiction.

*Listen to the Lion* was made with the assistance of the Australian Film Commission (as was *Journey Among Women*) Henri Salfra, who has directed feature films and television programs in France and Britain as well as in Australia, and whose credits have appeared on many popular UK series (*The Transatlantic*, *Soylent*, *Soylent* for the BBC and for others made by Weekend Television, ATV and Harlech) is now living in Australia again and intends to stay as long as he can make films.

It's a pity about *Journey Among Women*. Here is a film made so sloppily, with such clumsiness, lack of discipline and attention to detail, with such a lot of what can only be called silliness, that a good idea is simply thrown away.

And it was a good idea. Here are three convict ladies with their hair in tangles, their breasts falling out of their bodices, a bottle, when available, in their lips, sexual objects for a ramshackle sergeant, a lon-

ely forty captain and the odd soldier, ragged and further orders in the curt of the gaolhouse.

And here is Elizabeth, the judge-shipster's daughter in downed chafis, or something equally evocatively abject, wowed by the doctor (I think) and the captain (he is her daddy's pride and joy). And here is her mouth-capped maid, whose master is in the blockade, bitterly possessed by the captain.

One day the women break out, battering the soldiers with homemade weapons, and take to the bush accompanied by Elizabeth. Her flowered chafis swiftly become tatters, but it is her spirit that is really in shorts because she has surprised the captain in flagrant debauch, and looking a lot of a fool flustering about on the mud floor while the women cheer his labors.

The gaolhouse is started to the doors as cages, who for that part tread on over rocks and through streams hungry, tired frightened but elated. They are in a pretty bad way when they encounter a couple of men whom in any other context would be thought of as opponents, but who are probably bushwhackers.

As they trail one after the other deeper into the bush (twisted into the exquisite landscape, seascape, skyline of Catta Creek, in NSW, curiously photographed by Tom Cowan, who also directed and

wrote the screenplay with Dorothy Hewett and John Wiley, and would be laid much to cinematography) they form trees and fountains and quarrel and make love and become ever hungrier, more self-focused and dirtier.

One morning while they sleep a black girl appears out of her own peculiar dreamtime and shows them how to make a fire. She joins the triangle. Why this is as her own without tribe or dillybag is not explained.

She is a charming, lovable girl who wants to help. But it is not she who catches the kangaroo for dinner. A white girl does that.

The women begin to milk, the girls are sent out of their gear and into the forest. No Australia novel has a milky udderlike and sunny day paddling. They cut their hair, dash their faces with paint, wear baskets and animal skins, carry spear- and the pursuing soldiers, catch fish, and lose one of their number, little girl, adolescent Emily, to the sexual savagery of the bushwhackers.

Elizabeth keeps, and is kept, somewhat apart from the rest. One day the captain takes up on his horse and meets her as she emerges from a dip in the river, hand out, full frontal.

"Elizabeth", he says. She does not respond.

"Elizabeth, you're sick."

He takes off his shirt, she puts it on, mounts the horse, and takes into the distance.

Later he hangs up the solitary and a gun and bleats bits of the forest and some of the girls.

His own real canvas, sparsely and spectacularly, in the confusion. I'm not quite sure what happened to the girls.

The screenplay is absolutely awful, and the plot full of holes. I got the impression that there was not a firm hand on the production, and that much of the dialogue was improvised. It was not only badly written but poorly delivered. Judy Kuring has some control over her speeches as a gang leader, and Tim Elliott some over his, but that's about it. The captain is a ludicrous figure, played valiantly by Martin Phelan.

The elegant Elizabeth is played by Jane Fritsch, who did not manage to make her a sympathetic figure, or a believable one.

Despite its marvellous potential, and the assurance that Tom Cowan's cinematography at least would make the film worth seeing, the movie about *Johnny Among Women* was never good. Because it was to be made from a strongly feminist, rarepoint, it needed delicacy, discipline, form, none of which it has.

At the screen I attended people laughed out loud, and they were not wrong. But it may get audiences for the sexual penetration of a group of suddenly liberated women making their own lives take shape away from the conventions of society, even prison society, and its 8 aesthetic entry encourage young viewers.

## Roundup from

# TT Australian Centre, International Theatre Institute

The ITI proposes to co-operate with UNESCO in holding a workshop colloquium on the social role of theatre and its mission in present day society in Nigeria, Spring, 1978.

Next year is also the ITI's 30th birthday and a big international event has been proposed for all international theatrical organisations associated with the ITI to join together in celebration.

From next year on, Mondays to celebrate World Theatre Day on March 27th will no longer be written by an international celebrity but instead by a theatre personality in each member's country and some particularly memorable texts may subsequently be published by the Secretariat of the ITI in Paris.

The ITI will co-operate with UNESCO in a meeting planned from 14th-17th June 1978, in Paris to deal with the *Preservation and promotion of the performing arts in Africa and Asia*.

The 1978 Congress is to be held in Sofia, Bulgaria and the East Germany ITI has registered its wish to host the 1981 Congress. Release news to Australia is that the New Theatre Committee has agreed that the ITI hold its 1981 Congress somewhere in Asia.

### Dance Committee Events

*Renner, France* — March 1978 — in conjunction with the 5th International Festival of Traditional Art, the Dance Committee will continue its examination of the interaction of traditional folk dance and ballet.

*United States* — Summer 1978 — A meeting is planned in conjunction with the Connecticut College Festival of Dance.

*India* 1979 — International seminar in Indian Classical Dance in Bombay.

*Israel* 1978 — An international seminar on the subject of *Cultural Themes in Dance Through the Ages*.

*Poland* 1979 — Joint Dance Seminar to be conducted by Peter Gouzo of the USA.

### Music Theatre Committee Events

*Stockholm, Netherlands* June 1978 — 3rd Summer Course, Music Theatre Training.

— Interdisciplinary Working Meeting for singers, dancers and actors.

*Colmar, France*, Summer or Autumn 1979

— Actor/Workshop for singers, instrumentalists and composers.

*East Germany* — Winter 78/Spring 79 — Richard Wagner Colloquium — theoretical and practical problems linked with the interpretation of Wagner's works on the contemporary opera stage.

*Brussels, Czechoslovakia* — International Festival of Young Interpreters — Part I Soloists — October 18-19 1977

Part II Presentation of soloists and Narration of baritone October 1978

*Darmstadt, Yugoslavia* — July/August 1979 — Music Theatre and Canto — Symposium on vocal demands and expectations.

*Renner, France* Spring or Autumn 1979

— International meeting of small independent music theatre groups striving for a new reorganisation of theatre and contemporary music (performances and colloquium).

### Social drama and social action

The first World Workshop on Social Action and Community Theatre is to be held in Beirut, June 25-30, 1978. Registration is invited as soon as possible, addressed to the Organising Committee P.O. Box 940, Jerusalem.

### Theatre in Britain

PARVO International Summer Seminars for English-speaking students, advanced students and those with a special interest in the theatre, will take place in London, July 2-28, 1978. Accommodation is available but the closing date for applications to all Seminars is 31st January 1978. PARVO c/o The Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges, 43 Dorset Street, London W1H 3BN.

### Australia to hold ITI Congress?

At the 11th Statutory ITI Congress in Stockholm earlier this year, a recommendation by the New Theatre Committee urged the ITI "to hold its 1981 Congress in Asia."

As a near geographical neighbour of Asia we are widely interested in maximum co-operation between centres in our region, as well as with other willing centres in Latin America, Africa and the Arab world.

The Australian ITI Centre has therefore declared its intention to the Secretary General of ITI at UNESCO headquarters in Paris of offering to host the 1981 ITI Congress in 1981 in Australia. We await the ITI Executive Committee's reaction to our proposal with keen anticipation.



## The Year's Best on Records



This is not a systematic survey but a quick glance back over the year to see which records have appealed to me unduly. The only other criterion of choice I have applied to them is to try to imagine whether they would make interesting presents and whether the people who buy or receive them are likely to go on listening to them for sometime.

My first choice just weeks in from the end of 1976: the complete recording, the first complete recording I may say, of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, brilliantly played and ably sung under the direction of Lorna Muirow on three well-filled discs (Groch 527 806-1).

Anyone who still thinks of *Porgy and Bess* as a raggy kind of musical or as that indefinable entity known as a folk opera will have such ideas swept out of his mind by the revelation, quite remarkable on these discs, that *Porgy and Bess* is simply an opera, a very fine opera indeed in my opinion, and Gershwin's technique is the sustained composition necessary to knit the numbers of an opera together into a convincing whole as shown to be entirely adequate to its task.

There are better individual performances of this or that song on some of the earlier, heavily cut versions of this masterpiece, but none of them need be considered

seriously in opposition to this Decca recording if the listener wants to experience the work as a whole.

There are always people newly discovering the series of complete Bach Cantata recordings proceeding majestically on its way under the Telefunken label. The actual recordings are being shared among forces directed either by Nikolaus Harnoncourt or Gustav Leonhardt. Each volume is a boxed set of two discs, usually (but not always) containing four separate Cantatas. The performances use the voices that were available to Bach when he wrote the Cantatas: male voices, that is, with all the soloists being either boys or men, and all the instruments employed either survive from Bach's period in their original state or are careful copies of the surviving instruments of the period. In other words, we hear voices strong with gut songs and with the physical properties of the instruments used in Bach's time, eighteenth century oboes, flutes and recorders, horns, trumpets, kettle drums and so on.

This is not a matter of antiquarianism. The instruments are well and professionally played, and they reveal themselves on these recordings as having a character, a pungency or a soft-tongued appeal which fits the music better in terms of style and balance and which is both and appealing in its own right.

My experience has been — and I know it has been shared by thousands of other people — that listening to these records, even if it is something of a surprise at first, speedily induces in the listener an appreciation with any other kind of sustained performance of these works. The boxes are beautifully presented, with copious notes on the music, complete texts and translations and, bonus of bonuses, a reduced facsimile of the complete scores (now usually taken from the New Bach Edition). Volumes 15, 16 and 17 of this series have appeared here in the last twelve months (Telefunken 6 35305, 6 35306 and 6 35335 — each serial number standing for two discs). Any one of these volumes is thoroughly recommended if I had to make an agonising choice between them. I might for various reasons settle on Volume 16 (6 35306).

In opera that has been a rewarding and varied year. I have no hope of listing all the marvellous eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century operas that have entered the recording catalogue this year, some of them for the first time.

On technical grounds my first playing would go to the complete Puccini *Tosca* conducted by Colin Davis (Philips 6760 FOR two discs). Callas is not the most obvious choice for the title role, but she and Davis prove that she is an asset in the part, with qualities in her singing not quite

matched by any vocal. The rest of the cast is strong and the playing of the Covent Garden Orchestra is superb. Durrant conducting is unfailingly dramatic, but the crowning glory of the set is the three sound effects. This is an outstanding piece of recording and would certainly figure on my short list of the outstanding technical achievements of the year.

There were two highly commendable new complete recordings of Verdi's *Macbeth*, one on Philips and one on HMV. Either of these sets would be acceptable as a listening companion for a long period. My decisive preference, however, is for the HMV set conducted by Riccardo Muti and with Pierantonio Cossato absolutely outstanding, inimitable I would say, in the role of Lady Macbeth. One of the signs of this set is that the Ambrosian Chorus, a studio group in London, actually do far better with the choruses and music than their La Scala counterparts do on the Philips version. The reference number of the HMV set is SLS 992 (three discs).

For really early Verdi the series of recordings produced by Philips deserves the strongest recommendation. Among the titles that have come my way in the last year these of Verdi's *L'Alceste* (Philips 6703 064, three discs), which is based on Schiller's *Die Agathe*, *Un Geroe al Regno* (Philips 6701 015, three discs) and *Al Corsaro*, founded on Byron's *The Corsair* (Philips 6703 098, three discs), stand out. *Un Geroe al Regno* is Verdi's very first extant opera and the only extant opera he wrote before his final masterpiece, *Falstaff*. Its underpinnings in Rossini and Donizetti is obvious and it has tended to be written off as the failure it appeared to be when it was first presented. In fact, it seems a thoroughly delightful work.

Although we may not associate Wood at this stage of his career with lightness of touch or with any feeling for comic rhythm it is quite clear that he had thoroughly mastered the vocabulary and style of comic opera of the period; and this operates most recent of all the story of a man who is king for a day which justifies its debut on records. Lamberto Gottsche is the admirable Italian conductor who seems to have overall charge of the Philips series of early Verdi recordings.

In the category of song recitals there are, I think, two that stand out: a solo recital of Rossini and Mozart song by the young American mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade with impeccably sympathetic partnership from the Rotterdam Philharmonic conducted by Edo de Waart (Philips 6606 96) and the complete series of the London recordings made by Nellie Melba between the early years of the century and the late 1930s (HMV RLS 719 *Verdiana*).

The Melba recordings include abstracted tributes, some of which were never actually made, and the set makes it possible

to hear more of Melba's luscious performance in *La Bohème* than has been possible up to now. The Melba set is indispensable if you want to study the art of the great singer in close range. Frederica von Stade's disc is at least partial reassurance that the age of late singing is not becoming a thing of the past.

A disc of more specialised interest but containing singing of authentic virtuosity is *Carle d'Amore*, music by Peri, Caccini and their contemporaries in the great age of monody sung by Nigel Rogers (ABC Archive 2333 303). Rogers's mastery of embellishment and the delightfully varied costumes (ones which accompany this remarkable record make this a case of the record doing the music) are noteworthy.

One of the year has been less interesting from my point of view. There has been a sort of battle Beethoven stems from Berlin and the Chicago Orchestra on Decca, and a promising Schubert series conducted by Colin Davis on Philips is now in progress. A single disc which interested me to read and listen to and which has seemed just outstanding in later hearings was Carlos Kleiber's recording with the Vienna Philharmonic of Beethoven's *Seventh Symphony* (EGG 232 766), which has been already reviewed in these columns.

Among concertos I can recommend the Beethoven First Piano Concerto performed

by Roger Woodward with the New Philharmonia conducted by Kurt Masur (RCA RL 25001) and the coupling of Bartók's First and Third Piano Concertos performed by Stephen Bishop (now usually known as Stephen Bishop-Korovich) and the London Symphony conducted by Denis (Philips 9250 042).

There were several good discs of Italian music. Among these I count the disc which couples Lamberti's arrangement of Meyerbeer under the title of *Les Fanciulli* with a series of excerpts from the ballets inserted in Masetti's opera as performed by the National Philharmonia conducted by Richard King (Decca SXL 6672). This disc earns its special preference not only for the high quality of the playing but also because of its unusually good sound.

Among chamber music recordings I restrict myself to two especially desirable ones: the complete Beethoven String Quartets, as performed by the Quattro Italiano in what I am now convinced is the most satisfactory combination of performance and recording available, arranged over the works as a whole (Philips 6547 272, ten discs); Arthur Schnitzler and the Garsner Quartet teach perhaps an even higher plane of collective accomplishment in the Beethoven Chamber Music for Piano and Strings and the Schubert Piano Quartet (RCA SCL 92300, three discs).

## AUSTRALIA COUNCIL

### Theatre Board Grants DANCE, DRAMA, PUPPETRY, MIME

The Theatre Board has limited funds available for development and training projects, literary and professional in 1978.

#### Development Projects

Projects that involve companies or groups are invited to apply for institutions for special projects, particularly if an experimental or community oriented nature.

#### Training Programs

Professional groups are invited to apply for assistance in the implementation of long and designed training programs within Australia. Projects will be given to programs providing skills needed to the arts community (experience), full-time professional theatre companies are invited to apply for assistance to travel overseas for work on such programs (usually for a maximum of 4 weeks). A grant is available for outstanding applications — a maximum of \$10,000 for one year only.

#### Grants Directors' Theatre Development Development

#### Grants Directors

Applications are invited from groups of artists who wish to develop for themselves or for others, in the arts, education or business development. Applications may present a well-planned course of practical work in the theatre for the development of theoretical or design ability. Such a course would be undertaken through a series of studies (theatre, design and education) and in the field of community theatre, especially in relation to social issues. Applicants are expected to make their own arrangements for working with companies and to obtain advice in submitting their proposals with programs. The Theatre Board may wish to offer assistance and advice in completing a program.

Only those scholarships are available based on a maximum for any one scholarship of \$10,000 for a twelve month program. This sum includes a provision for travel and subsistence. The amount will vary with the program proposed and the length of time involved. It is expected that several local applications will take up scholarships from June 1978.

Applications for any of the above grants or scholarships must be submitted to the personnel from which can be obtained by writing to:

The Secretary, Theatre Board, Australia Council,

P.O. Box 200, NORTH BRIDGE, N.S.W. 2060.

Tel. (02) 992 2121.

The closing date is 15th February, 1978.

Decisions advised by 15th April, 1978.



## Ron Blair

### Interviewed by Tony Baker

Playwright Ron Blair was appointed assistant artistic director of the South Australian Theatre Company last June.

Born in 1942, Mr Blair first became involved with theatre in his student days at Sydney University. He helped create the original Nimrod Space in Darlinghurst and was co-author of Nimrod's first production, *Bigger*. He is also the author of *Flash Jim Faux*, *President Wilson in Paris*, *Christmas Angelen* and *Mad Bad and Dangerous To Know*. One of Australia's leading playwrights, he worked for the ABC until his appointment with the SATC.

Conversations with him for *Theatre Australia* began in his small office in the bowels of The Playhouse in the Festival Centre where he was preparing his first production for the company. Blair speaks with an experienced broadcaster's precision and composure but had to compete with the high drama, and doubled level, of a per-

formance of Marlow being played from the stage above. We then moved to the lounge outside the theatre and shared a bottle of mead with a backdrop of the Tannins and the very covered Adelaide Oval. It was, in fact, all very Adelaide. What were your impressions of Adelaide?

An extremely pleasant city. I was here in 1970, then again for the Adelaide Festival last year with the ABC and I was here earlier this year to work as the assistant on *Schlock for Scandal* (Coke George's first SATC production). That was really a lesson on both sides. At that time the possibility was that I would leave the ABC for a year, without pay. As it turned out I have left the ABC permanently. Their salary was such that I could not get a post off. So I resigned.

I have not had one ounce of regret. Staying at the ABC... Well, it can make children of adults. A long time at the ABC and that's the way it happens.

And the SATC staff, how are you finding that?

I like it. Of course I like jammie director Coke George. We got an extremely odd. He is a very satiric, energetic man. He never gets depressed, a very tolerant man, very hard working. I would

not come and work with someone I only partially respected because there is total (over)respect here, from nine in the morning and sometimes until eleven at night. It has been like winning a scholarship because it is years since I worked in the theatre in a professional way.

I have written plays, helped build the Nimrod, but as a director I haven't worked on the stage since university days. The whole thing about moving actors around a stage was slightly daunting. But I have broken that and I am not too at all worried by that. If the Australia Council had sent me to England to work with a company, it might have been a lot worse than coming to Adelaide.

When you were first here you were critical of *The Playhouse*. Are you still?

Well, I have reformed a bit. I do not think it is a disaster. It has shortcomings. The gallery is not enjoyable to sit in. I still don't like the boxes. There are faults.

What about the stage itself?

Well the stage is still a shell. It is not as flexible as the people that built it pretend it to be. It is not as flexible as it should be and the rest of the complex?

Well I think the Festival Theatre is very good indeed. I like the complex a lot. I like walking about it.

I think it is more successful than the Sydney Opera House as a complex because you are aware of other things going on. At the Opera House, until you went to get a seat or something like that, you are not aware of them. There is no awareness in Sydney of an overall strategy.

**How do you see yourself now as playwright/turned director, as basically a playwright or both?**

Professionally I was a playwright before I was a director. But I directed before I made a play. It's true that there are few playwrights that make good directors. Bill Ivy Shaw and Wright, don't misunderstand me I am not putting myself in that league, I am well aware that the combination is a rare one. I am not fit to comment on my own or partly I hope to do both. You're not wrong?

Yes I am first a writer. I have just finished a play which will be performed here next year. It's called *After* and I have been working on it. I suppose since 1971 I am drawn to historical characters. *After* is an imagination creation, it is not a scholarly work.

It is not like the *Byronic* piece, *Mad and Dangerous*. In *After*, a conscious editing of letters for an actor to perform, a literary occasion.

The Marx play is about the private emotional and sexual problems on a man who has a destiny. It is about Marx in London, in 1838 living in squalor with his wife and their servant and at the same time preparing for *Das Kapital*.

I support looking at the plays I write the things that seem to pop up again and again are obsessional ones. It's a style that seems to find its employment in humor and ceremony and the burgeoning, I hope, of the comedy through humor.

I won't deny that I am ambitious as a playwright. But my ambition is not necessarily to have a huge popular success. That would be pleasing, of course, but I put my own things.

When you came here, much was made of the fact that you are an Australian. South Australia had just had a spate of non-Australian appointments on the arts. But looking at what you write you seem far removed from that born (introduced in the theatre) control as it were not to be particularly concerned with nationalistic themes.

You are quite right. I am not preoccupied with them. They seem to be covered very well by other playwrights. I think David Williamson, Alex Buzo and others cover them very well. I would be mad to try and duplicate them.

**How do you think the SATC compares with the other State-sponsored companies?**

Well I think good theatre in a subsidized body must come from a benevolent director. I agree however I think that that is why Sydney theatre has suffered. There is no defined leadership. There is no house style. It's the Old Tate I am talking about. Of course, Nimrod does not have a benevolent director and lives very well in

you can hold that up as the exception. But I think a theatre should have a house style.

You say, whatever you can say about Peter Hall, and he is criticized often enough, he has thought through the kind of theatre he wants. I think the Old Tate has not thought it through. I have not seen enough of their productions but I suspect for the success of the MTC.

Another thing people accuse the SATC of 'playing it safe', of being rather conservative. They are not the people responsible for filling that theatre night after night with 200 people. If you put on something outrageous — and I don't say that in a pejorative sense — you might get praise but you would also get a massive audience if it is a difficult time to treat.

That is why I think Adelaide, as everyone seems to say, needs an alternative theatre. I think its needs, if not as very obvious, can be found in the Red Shift in Angus state, only, which costs about 20 or so. It seems that there is an intelligent leadership with an intelligent play.

It was and here some time ago that *Mr. Minsky* is in the city — now *The Opera Theatre* — should be a showcase for community theatre. Nothing seems to have happened. Would you favour such an approach? Could Adelaide support it?

I don't think so. When you look at Sydney, the Old Tate began at that small shed in the middle of the University of New South Wales now it is running three huge theatres. But it began in a small way. I think that to begin in an overambitious way is to never start.

Nimrod, again started in a small way. The MTC had years of scrambling around the university — I am not saying that scrambling is automatically good for the soul. I think the Red Shift would do with a few ground and get fixed up a bit. There is nothing wrong with seating 80 to 100. But to have a huge theatre goes against the grain at this stage. It is a different kind of theatre. *Do you feel any sense of isolation in Adelaide?*

Well for the past three years I had a isolation in Sydney, writing. You live in isolation if you write. Certainly my friends were only a phone call away and now a telex or a letter. But Nimrod was over here not long ago. The Festival is coming up. It doesn't seem to be at all isolated for me working with the agency of a book.

## Dallas Lewis

### Interviewed by Richard Mills

One of the more exciting new faces on the Sydney stage today is Dallas Lewis, currently playing *Alphaville* in Lewis Cullen's *Lower Depths* (Goorky) for the Old Tate at the Opera House. In the year since his 'graduation' from the Nimrod's classes, Dallas has not been short of a job.

The twenty-one year old actor started at Nimrod classes with Richard Wharm, in 1974. In September 1976, he replaced Drew Forsythe, who had to drop out of Ken Harker's Nimrod production of *After* just into or have you ever been? From there, he went straight in a three months stint at the William 660 Coffee Theatre with John Hawes. 'Not easy work, said the young actor, but it paid off in that while many traditional theatre people looked down on the 660's training to record, it was valuable experience. 'Although there were no words, you're out all night, and you've got to create the character. It was a very fast show, and it taught a lot of co-ordination.'

Dallas took that *After* over as *After* was a flying start for him. It gained him Jane Cameron as agent, and perhaps a number of offers that brought the young actor to Raymond Cusack's notice. He was asked to audition for Cusack's ATYP / Old Tate Adelaide tour, and during December 1976 and January 1977 was rehearsing for the tour during the day, playing the 660 at night.

For nearly six months he toured with the Adelaide group, who performed *Midnight's 4 Times in May* and *Chickie* to adults, several school plays and many workshops. Two days after his return to Sydney, Dallas was asked to contact John Bell, and make a week he was playing Cusack in *March* (the *After* Workshop), for a three week season in Adelaide. On return to Sydney there was a week return series of *Chickie* with the Adelaide cast at the MIDA Theatre. Not long after that he was asked to audition for *The Lower Depths*.

The striking greenness and sensitivity of Dallas features down him a 'working performer' quality, rather than that of an 'actor' acting. Add to this a natural sense of timing and an extremely strong dramatic presence, and the result is an exciting potential. His legs, while sometimes a bit too always commanding and sensitive to display.

Working with Cullen he says is stimulating. Cullen has produced *Lower Depths* in Romania, West Germany and Washington. Dallas feels that the fact that he is getting together a production that already comes in his experience, rather than tailoring a new one for a specific long run, has lost the director's complacency that he has not often struck.

'I think Cullen is most common directive to everybody he hires. "Don't play the last." What you just read the play, it comes off the page like a lot of other Romanian plays which are seen by many Australians as intellectual and very 'deep' and meaningful. What he often runs in Australia is the goodness of it. It is amazing to watch Cullen at work. He is achieving something he knows so well, and to see the way he just cuts across a line.'

Lower Depths finishes in late December, and Dallas will be looking for work again — if it has not already found him. He left one with the impression that he is supremely self-aware, knowing his own capabilities



in stage without script), and knowing exactly where he wants to go as an actor.

"Sometimes you can just read a play and know exactly what you want to do with the part, it's just you. At other times, if you haven't got totally in your mind what you want to do with it, (I feel) it is

better to get the technical things, where you're going and what you're doing, out of the way first. To rehearse the play without emotion, or without being pushed to that limit, and you're ready to fill it out. Some actors can begin to fill a part immediately but to give a 'performance' for every part on first reading is impossible.

slowly uncovered when I found out. I've always said — Never become a co-ordinator of anything. It's one job where you're sure to get your head chopped off."

Who and what does William Akers, automobile Production Director and Lighting Designer for The Australian Ballet co-ordinate? "Quite simple! The Building Commission employs an architect, Roy Grounds. He has a theatre consultant, Tom Brown in Sydney. I'm the missing link, the link between the Building Commission — the client, and Roy Grounds and Tom Brown. It's all much more exciting than it sounds. I spend a lot of time at meetings but they're interesting ones. I read a lot of plans. We spend hours checking them. There are still around 2000 more plans to check before the Centre is finished in 1987." Recently he lifts his eyebrows and adds, "God and the Italians permitting."

"I'm involved in other aspects of the project too. I'm on the committee of the Performing Arts Museum which will be

part of the Centre and that is going to be marvelous. A museum, superb stage and such a dull but that is going to be a museum and alive one. We've got some magnificent designs for it already."

Bill is one of the most civilized men one is ever likely to encounter, a marvelous raconteur, a gourmet cook, a connoisseur of fine wines, a collector of guns and antique jewellery, and so a complete sophisticate. He was too intent to delight and amuse, very often, as a shield to cover up a more sensitivity and periods of quiet desperation. Always beautifully dressed and unfailingly courteous, he is one of the most able, popular and best-known figures in the sophisticated world of Australian theatre.

"I started off as an actor you know. I had a great upbringing start. It looked as though I would have to become another Harpo Marx. I had a voice so high it was almost phrenetic — the kind that drives dogs mad. It was discovered, at all the ridiculous things to be born without, that I was born without an ovary and nothing could be done about it. I enrolled at the Ralston Academy of Dramatic Art and they helped me there a great deal to overcome my high voice. Joan Sutherland was one of their pupils too. As a dramatic actor, she was even worse than I was."

Bill went on to join the John Alden Shakespeare Company, played in Graham Carroll's production of *The King and I* and then joined J.C. Williamson's.

Just as Bill was due to start rehearsing for *Dear Charles* his acting career came to an end. He was ordered by the Sydney Manager of K.W. to go to Melbourne and "just help me out for a couple of months as Borisovskiy's assistant stage manager. Bill was appalled. "But I just couldn't budge", he moaned. "Yes, mate!" Three days later he walked into Borisovskiy's rehearsal "to be confronted by 35 raging cats. I stayed with Borisovskiy and then The Australian Ballet for 22 years until I joined the Art Centre two years ago. My God! What I think of what I endured to become an actor I wonder how I let them do that to me!

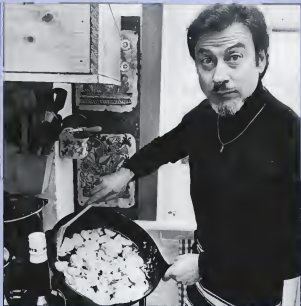
For all his sophistication, Bill is very Australian and very forthright. He laughs. Here at the time "I usually lost." Then when Peggy van Praagh came back to Australia to start The Australian Ballet in 1965, she asked Bill to join the company as Lighting Designer. "I'd been lighting all Boris's productions so I suppose that's what she thought I was, so that's what I became. I fought with Peggy too, especially when I thought she was trying to make me a replica of the Royal Ballet and I'd love that we're an Australian company."

I said right quite a number of productions I did the lighting for Jonathan Taylor's Australian Drama Theatre season at the Sydney Opera House earlier in the year. They are so good that it was a great thrill for me to work with them. Also for the Deane Harrison tribute to Peggy van

## Bill Akers

### Interviewed by Pamela Ruskin

"What exactly is your title these days, Bill?" I ask, removing a cat or two from my lap. Looking a little sheepish he hands me a card. It reads — WILLIAM AKERS, Theatre Planning Co-ordinator and before that, Victorian Arts Centre Building Committee. Before I can comment, he says, "When I took this on I swear I wouldn't let them call me any kind of officer. I hated the idea anyway of becoming a Public Servant and 'officer' is the opposite of that. Anyway, as we've been made a Statutory Body, some of us are Public Servants anyway. So when I left The Australian Ballet to join the Arts Centre, I said to myself, 'Bill! I wonder what sort of title they've thought up for you?'



French, and I've done the lighting for Anita Wornham live production at Jones Lake where the Australian Ballet are doing. So I'm not out of touch, but my new job gives me a much wider range of interests. The ballet world is so relaxed and I only make it now.

Did I ever tell you about the lighting for Bobby Holzman's ballet, *San Juan*? He rang me up and said that he'd just heard this marvellous music of Peter Dinklage's and I must go and listen to it because he was going to choreograph a ballet for it. So off I went and listened and came back and saw Bobby a three page letter giving him my ideas on it.

He rang me up much later to discuss the lighting, say "Well, there's one movement I can only describe as 'underground green' and I said, 'Oh yes? 21 and 38?' They're two shades of lighting green."

Some time later we were both in Cannes, India with the Australian Ballet, and we were taken to Angkor Wat and the Thai Forest temple that's been excavated there. A marvellous place with 800 trees growing over the walls. Very serene and magical.

Bobby sat down and produced a gold-leafed cigarette from his gold case. After a while, the sun began to filter through those strange trees, very weirdly and wonderfully. "There you are!" says Bobby triumphantly. "Underground Green", and I said simply, "Yes? 21 and 38?"

Anthony Tudor is a great choreographer but quite different. He's a Zen Buddhist — a very remote sort of man. He tries you out all the time and he always appears to be very serious. He came out to do *Pillar of Fire* for the Company. When he started working on it I said to him "What colour can you do you feel

for this, Mr Tudor?" very respectable and he said, "Always do pale blue and pale blue!" I was so shocked I went to Peggy and said "I can't let it go on like this. I know he's a great man but it looks like 'Alice in Wonderland'." Peggy said, "Come down hell! I'll go and talk to him", which was very brave of her because I think she was nearly as scared of him as I was. So off she went and she came back smiling that mischievous smile of hers. "Mr Tudor says you can do whatever you like. He was just trying to find out how much you knew."

Ruth Murray is the most elegant dancer to light, for I remember lighting that beautiful garden scene in *Raymonda* for her. Ruth came on and then stopped and placed at me. "Ruth!", he yelled "For Chrysos!" Can't you give me some points? I said patiently, "But Ruth, you



don't have pink in a garden" and Rhoda replied firmly, "I do! I want pink! I always have pink!"

Backbit in Lohansen proved an unforgettable experience for Mr William Akers in more ways, than one. There was the big Arab called Mastapha in charge of the switchboard. A huge fellow. We were opening with Act III of Swan Lake, perfectly beautiful as that goes, so sitting with the natural moonlight and all that. On the opening night, Fifield was dancing and I was tucked behind a curtain, making the eyes up in the switchboard. "Mastapha", I called, "If you get Cue 3 right, I'll love you forever. Right? Stand by for Cue 1. Cue 1?" It worked like a dream. "Marvelous", I said, "Mastapha. I love you, stand by for Cue 2. Cue 2 go. Mastapha, I love you!" It was going beautifully. The dancers came on and Fifield danced from behind a rock opposite me and began the famous arm flapping movements of the waltz. Then I called up to Mastapha, "Stand by for Cue 3. Cue 3 go". No answer. "Cue 3 go" and again absolutely nothing happened. So I called, "What the hell's going on up there. Cue 3 GO!" Silence! And then very suddenly, the voice floated down, "You don't say you love me!" From that on whenever I forgot the "Mastapha, I love you" — no longer "My God!"

In one respect, the Miller Company's loss is theatre's gain in terms of what the Victorian Arts Centre will mean to the whole theatrical and musical scene. On the other hand, it would be a great pity, if

Bill's stock of money should dry up in his new and less traumatic role, because his expertise in this area is certainly no less than in the more technical arts of stage production and lighting.

## The Last Farewell

### Barry Eaton

The Kilham 680 Coffee Theatre is complete its final show. Sad but true. The theatre must close on the 15th of December because of new fire regulations that come into effect in the new year. Regulations that are impossible to meet for the 680.

So the already-cherished 10th-anniversary night on October 17th was a memorable night. The new show is a combination of new material plus a lot of old favourites.



The first half was from country to country in a series of pleasant but reasonably forgettable numbers and sketches.

Only in the second half, with the appearance of John Howard, did the show take off. A lively Cue 3 sequence knocked things off — if you'll pardon the pun. Some refreshing sketches were — "My Wife the Queen", a Lily Tomlin number, a great send up of history with John Howard and Peter Parkinson and a mad Spike Jones piece.

But the audience really loved the old favourite "My Darling Wren Come Back". "Edelweiss" and a hilarious Horvitz song.

Then there was the nostalgic finale with "Hello Dolly". There are more favourites here than Nellie Melba could have dreamed of!

So this is it. The last farewell. Where is from here for the intrepid 680 people? John wants to have a break early next year and will then have for alternative ways of presenting his shows. But with the independence of the training school shows, he has his work cut out transforming this into a multi-audience establishment. Neither need by no long tradition are fearful of its recent financial failure he intends to keep its main stage for "straight" theatre. Television is another area that he would like to explore.

On behalf of the many fans of the 680 I wish him the best of luck. He deserves it. So do we.

## NB

### Editorial address

Theatre Australia has a new editorial address:  
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There will be no January issue of *Theatre Australia*, but in the big February Survey issue there are roundups of the state of theatre, state by state, during 1977; Gordon Chater on *A Year of Benjamin Franklin*; Peter Holderness on *Theatre Photography*; Geoffrey Hutton on *The Star System*; Act One of *A Happy and Holy Occasion* and lots lots more.

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